Fall 12-2010

# The Effect of Classroom Bibliotherapeutic Intervention on Perceptions of Bullying Among Teachers of Young Children Aged Four and Five

Patricia Gail Doss
*Kennesaw State University*

Kennesaw State University
Bagwell College of Education

# Dissertation Signature Page

The dissertation of

Patricia Gail Doss 000473189 Elementary Education

CANDIDATE NAME/KSU ID CONCENTRATION

Titled: The Effect of Bibliotherapeutic Intervention on Perceptions of Bullying Among Teachers of Young Children Aged Four and Five

**submitted to the Bagwell College of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:**

**Doctor of Education**

**has been read and approved by the Committee:**

David L. Martin — DISSERTATION CHAIR SIGNATURE — 10/29/10 — DATE

C McGrine — COMMITTEE MEMBER SIGNATURE — 10-29-10 — DATE

Jo E. Williamson — COMMITTEE MEMBER SIGNATURE — 10-29-10 — DATE

COMMITTEE MEMBER SIGNATURE — DATE

COMMITTEE MEMBER SIGNATURE — DATE

# THE EFFECT OF CLASSROOM BIBLIOTHERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION ON PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING AMONG TEACHERS OF YOUNG CHILDREN AGED FOUR AND FIVE

by

Patricia Gail Cosper Doss

A Dissertation

Presented In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the
Degree of
Doctor of Education
In
Leadership for Learning
Educational Leadership
In the
Bagwell College of Education
Kennesaw State University

Kennesaw, GA
2010

DEDICATION

*I dedicate this dissertation to my children, Sarah and Rob, my sisters, Polly and Marie, and my dear friend, Sherri, for their constant encouragement and assistance throughout the years of work it took to complete this paper.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The pursuit of a degree of this magnitude by its nature involves many supporters. Many were there for me when times were difficult both personally and professionally. I wish to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. David Martin, for his tireless support, patience, and encouragement. Through many challenges of his own, he found the time and energy to back my endeavors. His constant guidance and demand for a quality product is appreciated. Without the support of the other members of this dissertation committee, Dr. Gwen McAlpine and Dr. Jo Williamson, this work would not have the insight and broad perspective that increases its quality. Dr. McAlpine gave freely of her time to walk me through topics and kindly offered resources to enable me to think deeper and more critically. Dr. Williamson was always open to my questions and prompt with her responses, holding me accountable for defending my thoughts.

Without the support of my Headmaster, Don Robertson, I would never have been able to make afternoon meetings, attend special conferences, and put in the time involved to complete this work. He always had faith that I would succeed and was patient when I had to leave his meetings early. He allowed me the flexibility needed to take advantage of many opportunities that made this paper richer.

An immense amount of gratitude goes to Julia Stoll, friend and colleague, for devoting much time and effort in making this research a reality. Her expertise and commitment to children played a large role in bringing this study to fruition.

Collaboration took on a new meaning for me when working on this paper and degree. The relationships and support of my Early Childhood Cohort were invaluable. Many nights

Scott Calta would patiently allow me to talk through concepts that did not quite make sense after class and often the entire cohort would discuss ideas and just generally cared about each other throughout this journey. So to Scott, Jennifer, Rebecca, and Sally I thank you and appreciate being able to work with such scholarly educators.

To many professors at Kennesaw State University I also am grateful. You have made me a better person and educator. Thank you especially to Dr. Rick Breault who was there for our first class and our last, and challenged our philosophical thinking and to Dr. Mike Dishman who modeled what professional educators can and should do and who set the bar high. Thank you both for caring enough to listen and to give of your time.

Lastly, I cannot thank my family and friends enough for the numerous calls, prayers, and encouraging conversations that allowed me to complete this work. You never wavered in your insistence that I would complete this paper. Thank you to my faculty who, although I know grew tired of hearing about this paper, were always willing to listen and help with school duties when I was overloaded. I am grateful to my late husband, Bob, who did not like the time that was taken from him to complete this paper, but still taught me the love and value of education over our years together and was proud of what I attempted. I missed our conversations about this work and your editing of it. This paper is enhanced by your scholarly wisdom.

ABSTRACT

THE EFFECT OF CLASSROOM BIBLIOTHERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION ON PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING AMONG TEACHERS OF YOUNG CHILDREN AGED FOUR AND FIVE

by

Patricia Gail Cosper Doss

This paper investigates how the application of bibliotherapeutic intervention affects teachers' perceptions of bullying in their young students, ages four and five. Bullying has become a serious global concern that has manifested itself in school dropouts, shootings, and suicides. Bibliotherapy is one way to help children solve problems using books and is advocated by researchers for use with bullying prevention.

Little research has been done on bullying in young children. This qualitative phenomenological study will add to the body of literature regarding bullying in young children ages four and five and will examine perceptions of teachers of young children regarding occurrences of bullying in school. The research question in this study is how the application of classroom bibliotherapeutic intervention affects perceptions of bullying among teachers of young children aged four and five.

Data sources include: 1) focus groups before and after bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions in the teachers' classrooms by the participating school's counselor, 2) teachers'

observations of their students on the playground before and after these same bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions, and 3) an interview with the participating school's counselor that served to increase reliability and triangulate this research. Results of this study indicated that teachers' perceptions of bullying were dramatically changed through bibliotherapeutic intervention in their classrooms. After the intervention sessions, teacher participants began to recognize bullying behavior in their students and reacted with positive steps to empower and protect their students. It is hoped that this study will create an awareness of bullying in teachers of young children who read this paper that will result in action to address bullying early, perhaps lessening this harmful behavior that has resulted in the death of several students in the last few years.

*Keywords: bullying, bibliotherapy, young children, teachers' perceptions, focus groups, interview, observations*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

## DEFINITIONS

Aggressive bully: a bully who tends to be more physical, impulsive and non-empathetic

Aggressive victim: another name for a bully-victim

Bibliotherapy: the use of literature to solve problems

Bully: one who repeatedly demonstrates negative behavior towards another person over time

Bullying: a situation in which one is repeatedly faced with negative action over time and has a difficult time defending him or herself

Bully-Victim: one who may switch between the roles of bully and victim

Bystander: one who witnesses bullying behavior

Cyberbullying: using information communication technologies to bully

Overt aggression: aggressive behavior that is open, often physical bullying

Phenomenology: the study of the development of human consciousness and self-awareness; used in research to examine everyday life experiences (Webster, 1997)

Passive bully: a bully who joins an episode of bullying that was instigated by another

Passive victim: another name for a submissive victim

Perception: belief, opinion, or understanding

Proactive aggression: aggressive behavior by children who are helping a child bully someone s/he does not like

Reactive aggression: aggressive behavior that occurs as a result of being teased or threatened

Relational aggression: aggressive behavior directed at social relationships

Submissive victim: one who is more insecure or anxious than students in general; may have low self-esteem, may feel stupid or may not have any good friends

Victim: one to whom negative behavior is directed

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

# Chapter One

## Introduction

"Don't laugh at me, don't call me names,
don't take your pleasure from my pain."
"The Best of Peter, Paul & Mary"
(Seskin & Shamblin, 2002, track 25).

### *Background*

Bullying is a topic of great concern and has been for many years. It, regrettably, affects thousands of children daily and can be life-threatening. The fact that bullying was mentioned in a speech by Abraham Lincoln reminds us that bullying has been discussed in this country for more than a century (Lincoln, n.d., reprinted 2008). Yet this detrimental behavior has not been curtailed in these many years.

Americans are sadly all too familiar with the recent tragedies in schools where bullying has been linked to the deaths of students. The U. S. Secret Service interim report for 2005 states that in 37 school shootings, with 41 attackers, two-thirds of the attackers had been victims of bullying (Werle, 2006). Columbine shootings prompted students to write letters to the newspaper expressing their understanding of how being bullied in school could "push one to the breaking point" (Christie, 2005, p. 725). According to Viadero (as cited in Scarpaci, 2006), bullying is a "prime factor" in two-thirds of school shootings, and Vossekuil (as cited in Scarpaci, 2006) believes that revenge is the motivation in over one-half of shootings (p. 172). The following poem published in a 2003 issue of the *English Journal* (Schaafsma, 2003) is entitled "Bully" and was written by a 13-year old boy. This work illustrates the serious nature of bullying as the boy writes about refusing to attend the funeral of a classmate who beat him:

I didn't go to your funeral
I didn't feel sorry for you
But I did feel guilty that I was glad that
The wish I made the night I limped home
Beaten and bleeding
Came true (p. 76).

This researcher became concerned about her students when attendance at a conference regarding bullying brought her attention to the magnitude of this problem. According to Ritter, in 2002, the American Medical Association reported that one-half of the children in the United States have been bullied and ten percent are bullied on a regular basis (Scarpaci, 2006). A study by Nansel et al. (2001) of 15,686 students in grades six through ten in both public and private schools in the United States, found that bullying among school-aged children is increasing and becoming a problem that affects student well-being. However, there are no simple solutions to bullying.

*Problem*

Bullying is described by Olweus (2002) as a situation in which someone is being exposed to negative actions by one or more people repeatedly and this person is having difficulty defending him or herself. Having had no personal experience with bullying as a child, the researcher began to discuss and listen to stories told her by adults who were bullied as children. These adults retained vivid memories of those experiences decades later.

Limber and Nation (n.d.) feel that bullying deserves "special attention" due to the "prevalence" of it and the "seriously underestimated" harm it causes children (p. 1). They feel that this behavior is particularly malignant because it pits powerful children against those with less power, thus making these interactions more difficult than normal conflict resolution between peers.

Maslow (1954, 1987) describes the need to feel safe as second only to physiological needs. Children are not able to address higher-level functions, such as learning, unless their immediate needs are met. "…[Y]ou can't learn effectively if you're scared of being beaten up after school or if you are getting dirty looks all day from the in crowd," according to Thompson, Grace, and Cohen (2001, p. 213). Academics become secondary when children are fearful of physical violence. "The goal [of proficient educators] is to create a classroom where children feel safe," and where teachers truly care about their students' feelings and their thoughts regarding their peers (Kersey & Masterson, 2010, p. 262).

Given that no initiative succeeds without a whole-hearted commitment from those who must implement it, e.g. the classroom teachers, this author approached her initial research by examining perceptions of occurrences of bullying behavior on the part of classroom teachers. In 2008, she conducted a pilot study that measured teachers' perceptions of occurrences of bullying behavior among kindergarteners. In this study, two female kindergarten teachers observed their kindergarten students on the playground before and after bibliotherapeutic bullying intervention and marked observed occurrences of specific bullying behaviors on a checklist (e.g. hitting, pushing, and isolating). As an extension of the pilot study, further research is performed here in the hope of ascertaining how the presentation of bibliotherapeutic intervention strategies to students and their teachers might influence teachers' perceptions of occurrences of bullying behavior in young children aged four and five.

Parents and teachers often do not address bullying and may not take bullying seriously; daily incidences of bullying are "too often" ignored (Siris & Osterman, 2004, p. 288). In a study of six elementary schools in the Pacific Northwest, Frey et al. (2005) found that parents and children are hesitant to report bullying with teachers intervening in less than 20% of bullying

cases. Teachers may ignore bullying behavior for fear of making the victim feel more ostracized, or teachers may look the other way or hesitate to confront children and parents in the hope that children may work out their own problems (Katch, 2003).

Several researchers such as Olweus (2002), Coloroso (2008), and Arseneault et al. (2006) as they reported in the *Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics*, tell us that bullying is more than teasing and normal play. They cite many physical symptoms such as stomach aches, headaches, and inability to sleep that result from being a victim of bullying. Limber also points out that children tend not to outgrow the role of victim and may continue to be bullied for years (as cited in Limber & Nation, n.d.). Olweus (as cited in Limber & Nation, n.d.) adds that victims may become adults who suffer from depression and mental health concerns.

Recent news events have demonstrated that, when ignored, bullying leads to much more than physical symptoms. A young girl in Massachusetts made the news recently due to her struggle with bullying at a new school. “Three months after 15-year-old Phoebe Prince took her own life, details emerge about the escalating taunts and smears a group of students used to harass her” (Smolowe, Herbst, Egan, Rakowsky & Mascia, 2010, p. 66). The article further states that teachers did nothing to help her. News reports such as Miller’s (2010) CBS News article confirm the information from these authors. As one can see from the above reports, it is imperative that educators address bullying so that students will not suffer and be subjected to bullying behavior repeatedly during their school years.

Given the serious nature of bullying behavior, this researcher became concerned about her students and how bullying might impact them. Being unable to find significant research regarding bullying in young students, the researcher felt compelled to investigate the nature of

bullying and what, if anything, is being done to curtail bullying in students aged four and five. Thus, she has designed this study to ascertain more information regarding the effect of bibliotherapeutic intervention on teachers' perceptions of bullying in young children.

Bibliotherapy involves using literature to solve problems. Forgan (2002) purports that using books to address problems is not a new idea, but one that has recently been given renewed attention. Indeed, Johnson, Wan, Templeton, Graham, and Sattler (2000) tell us that bibliotherapy dates back to the Ancient Greeks. These authors also say that the use of bibliotherapy with children has increased as the number of challenges children face has increased, such as divorce, violence, and drugs. Given that teachers of young children are familiar with using children's literature in their classrooms to address issues such as social skills and appropriate behaviors, the researcher chose bibliotherapy as the foundation for bullying intervention sessions for this research.

*Research Question*

The research question in this study is how the application of classroom bibliotherapeutic intervention affects teachers' perceptions of bullying among young children ages four and five. For the purposes of this study the word *perceptions* is used to mean beliefs, opinions, and understandings. This research is intended to investigate teachers' insight and discernment in recognizing, addressing and preventing bullying in young children which are three factors that reveal their perceptions of bullying in their culture.

Specifically, the study measured teachers' perceptions regarding bullying in their students before and after bullying bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions directed by the school's counselor. In addition to pre- and post-bibliotherapeutic intervention focus groups, teachers observed their students' behavior on the playground before and after bibliotherapeutic

interventions sessions and recorded their observations using a behavioral checklist created by the researcher. An interview was conducted with the participating school's counselor to add reliability and triangulation for this study.

Teachers play a crucial role in establishing a classroom atmosphere where learning is paramount (Cuban, 2007). Yet, learning is compromised when bullying is present in the classroom and teachers do not act on it (Beane, 2005; Hallford, Borntrager & Davis, 2006). While research regarding bullying is increasing, most of this research appears to be directed toward children from third grade through middle school. This study focuses on bullying in a younger population.

*Purpose*

Given the critical role teachers play in addressing bullying (Yoon & Kerber, 2003), and the lack of research regarding bullying in young children, the purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions of bullying in young children ages four and five. Olweus (2002, as cited in Hanish, Kochenderfer-Ladd, Fabes, Martin & Denning, 2004) states that adult awareness is a critical piece when addressing bullying and that when teachers are more aware and involved, rates of bullying decrease significantly. This study increases the body of literature available regarding bullying in young children and is useful in improving teacher awareness of bullying among young children. With an increased awareness of bullying among teachers, one might expect that schools would be more attuned to recognizing bullies and victims; therefore, classroom culture and learning may be positively impacted.

Bibliotherapeutic intervention strategies should provide knowledge to teachers regarding the definition of bullying and ways to respond to bullying behavior. It is described by Olweus (2002) as a way to assist with classroom discussions about bullying and creating rules to prevent

it. This knowledge about bullying may help provide teachers empowerment and confidence to address bullying. Then hopefully, teachers will be more willing to get involved in preventing bullying among young children, and that will bring about less bullying for students now and in later years. This research should serve to inform educators, parents, and the community about bullying so as to allow all stakeholders to be better informed and work together to improve the lives of young children.

*Significance of Study*

Educators must not underestimate the importance of the prevention of bullying in schools. Newman, Horne, and Bartolomucci (2000) feel it is critical that victims of bullies have support from their teachers, counselors, and principals. These authors believe that when children lack support, they may feel hopeless and have no means to escape bullies. Children are ashamed to tell others, even their parents, because they feel they are somehow responsible for the bullying or are embarrassed that this is happening to them (Frey et al., 2005). These researchers also state that victims feel powerless to do anything to stop the bullying.

Frey et al. (2005) further assert that parents are reluctant to report bullying incidents to the school because parents may not understand what is happening, may not believe the child is able to handle it, and do not know what, if anything, school officials can do about it. In a study of middle school students, Espelage and Asdiao (2001) found that adults in general encouraged bullying victims to ignore the bullying. Children may be raging inside, but suffer in silence until they are unable to control this rage which may manifest itself in violent behavior, or even suicides. “If adults do not provide the intervention students need, then students will take matters into their own hands” (Garbarino & deLara, 2003, p. 7).

According to Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, and Wiener (2005), bullying does not simply involve the bully and victim; it "unfolds in the social context of the peer group, the classroom, the school, the family, and the larger community" (p. 719). These authors remind us that research needs to investigate the "various elements influencing bullying" (p. 719). They also recount how a true picture and understanding of bullying cannot occur without understanding teachers' views and ways they influence its intervention. This study adds to the knowledge of this complex behavior by focusing on teachers' understanding of bullying and their perceptions that might influence their actions in recognizing and responding to it.

*Impact on Learning*

Bullying behavior interferes with student learning and school attendance for students of all ages. "An anxious, afraid or alienated student has a diminished learning capacity" (Weissberg, Resnik, Payton, & O'Brien, 2003, p. 46). Coloroso (2008) says that children "…spend a lot of time thinking up ways to avoid the trauma [of bullying] and have little energy left for learning" (p. xx).Townsend-Butterworth (n.d.) says that schoolwork and grades may suffer when a child is bullied. She goes further to state that children may become afraid to go to school. Other researchers agree that children may have an increased number of absences or want to stop attending school (Beane, 2005; Hallford et al., 2006).

As seen in news reports and current periodicals, bullying behavior has a serious, negative impact on our schools, including physical injuries and loss of life in some cases. According to Whitted and Dupper (2005), a school may be labeled unsafe if violent bullying behavior occurs without being addressed. Students in one local school are currently working together with district leaders to help their school become a safer, more comfortable learning environment that defines

and prohibits bullying (Dobies, 2010). This initiative was generated as a result of one student experiencing bullying because of a homosexual lifestyle, according to Dobies' report.

*Lack of Research*

Current research does not appear to adequately address the issue of bullying behavior in children younger than third grade. Therefore, this study is sorely needed to add to the body of research aimed at assisting younger children with bullying behavior. The initial way to aid students is by helping teachers become aware of bullying and its serious implications (Scarpaci, 2006). Atlas and Pepler (as cited in Mishna et al., 2005) point out that "teachers are on the front line in addressing bullying" and that "developing an awareness of the complexity of the phenomenon" may lead teachers to become more responsive (p. 734). Yoon and Kerber (2003) believe that teachers play an important role in the prevention and intervention of bullying behaviors and feel that teachers' responses to bullying should be "carefully examined" due to their importance in setting the classroom climate (p. 27).

*Conceptual Framework*

The conceptual framework used in this study for examining teachers' perceptions of occurrences of bullying in their young students is Nel Noddings' Ethic of Care. Noddings' (2005a) approach purports that the goal of education is a moral one, where educators need to nurture the growth of caring and lovable persons. It is her contention that one cannot ignore the needs of children "in the service of making them more competent in academic skills" (Noddings, 2005a, p. 10). When educators use Noddings' ethic of care as a lens through which they view bullying, their attitudes and the care of their students will likely change. "Fair, generous, caring, and empathetic educators…can effectively guide students" in making good decisions to

questions such as “Should I speak my mind about an issue…even though I may lose friends?” (Weissbourd, 2003, p. 8).

Moral education from Noddings’ perspective includes the following four tenets that will be used in the conceptual framework of this study: 1) modeling, 2) dialogue, 3) practice, and 4) confirmation. This study will use these tenets as a lens through which the researcher examines and analyzes data. The researcher investigated how these tenets may be used in the classroom and their connection to bullying prevention.

*Definitions of Relevant Terms*

For the purposes of this study, the researcher uses the term *bullying* to mean a situation in which one is repeatedly faced with negative actions over time and has a difficult time defending him or herself. The study addresses the roles of bystanders, victims, and bullies. *Bystanders* are those who observe bullying behavior; *victims* are those to whom the bullying behavior is directed. A *bully* is one who repeatedly demonstrates negative behavior towards another person. *Bibliotherapy* is the use of literature to solve problems and it is used in this study for bullying intervention sessions. The word *perceptions* is used in this paper to mean beliefs, opinions, or understandings (see Definitions, p. xi).

*Organization of Study*

The remainder of this study is organized into four chapters, a reference list and appendices. Chapter Two provides a review of related literature dealing with bullying. This chapter also includes an in-depth discussion of the conceptual framework being used for this research. Chapter Three describes the overall research design and methodology of the study. The instruments and participants in this study are described here. The procedures the researcher followed, sample selection, assumptions, research paradigm, and rationale for data analysis are

also included in this chapter. Chapter Four consists of data analysis of three data sources: 1) focus groups, 2) observations, and 3) an interview. Data was organized and themed, and findings were written for the data that was presented. Chapter Five summarizes and discusses the results of the data as the researcher reflected on the findings and formed conclusions; the chapter also includes a summary, and a discussion of implications for future research. The study concludes with a reference list and appendices which include instruments used to collect data for the study.

# CHAPTER TWO

## Literature Review

### *Bullying*

#### *Definitions*

Research clearly states that bullying behavior is a global concern for our children today. In the past, whether bullying had been identified as such or not, there has been little done to help those who have fallen victim to it. Olweus defines bullying as negative actions repeatedly directed towards a person over time (Frey et. al., 2005). Bullying involves an imbalance in power and harm to another, whether emotionally, physically, or socially (Olweus,1993; Smith & Brain, 2000). Olweus (as cited in McNeilly-Choque, Hart, Robinson, Nelson, & Olsen, 1996) also believes that bullying is overt aggression used to intimidate another person, the victim.

Olweus (2002) describes three types of bullies: 1) aggressive, 2) passive, and 3) bully-victim. Aggressive bullies tend to be more physical, impulsive and lack empathy. They often have an aggressive personality and are motivated by power and the desire to dominate others. The passive bully tends to have an unhappy life and to join another episode of bullying that has already begun, perhaps at the instigation of an aggressive bully. They often become enthusiastic participants and align themselves with a more powerful bully. Lastly, the bully-victim is a bully who has been a victim in the past (Olweus, 2002). Examples of these bully categories can be found in such realistic works as the novel, *The Chocolate War*, by Robert Cormier.

Sullivan (as cited in Entenman, Murnen, & Hendricks, 2005) proposes three parties involved in bullying: the bully, the victim, and the bystander. Olweus (n.d.) describes the bully as the person who repeatedly demonstrates negative behavior towards another person. The

victim is described by him as the person to whom the negative behavior is directed and the bystander as the one who witnesses the negative behavior.

Olweus (2003) reports that there are several roles, both active and passive, that students may play during an episode of bullying that may influence its outcome (see Figure 1). Olweus (2003) uses the Bullying Circle in Figure 1 as a way to initiate discussions with parents, teachers and students as to how bullying may be prevented. He says that teachers may use this circle illustration to help students see how they may be involved, even passively, and how important it is for them to move to the right side of the circle.

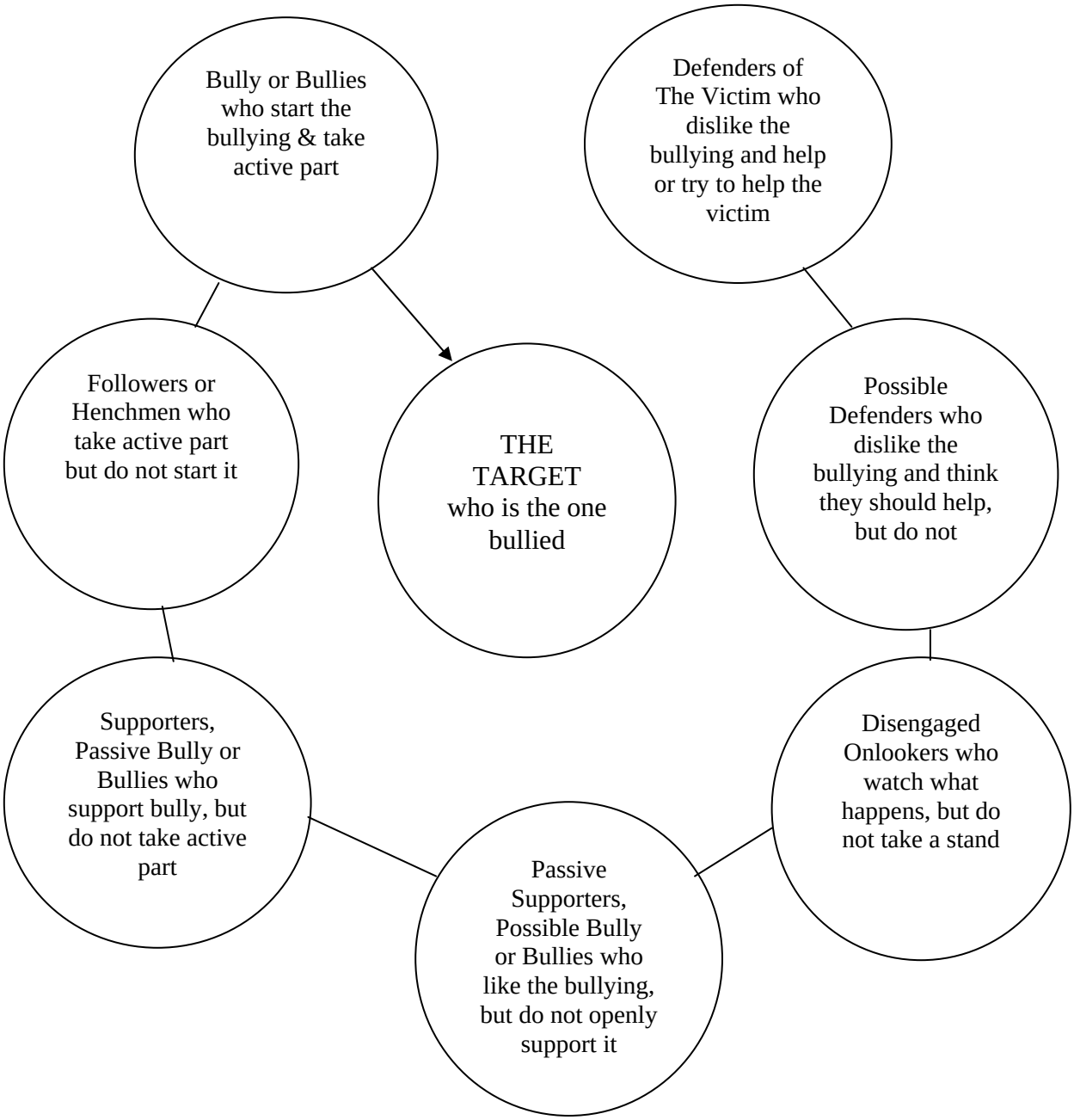


Figure 1. The Bullying Circle (Olweus, 2003, p. 14).

Reactions and Roles of Students in Acute Bullying Situation

*History of Bullying*

The first major study of bullying behavior was done by Olweus in Bergen, Norway, from 1983-1985 with 2500 elementary and junior high students. Espelage and Swearer (2004) report that most of the research done on bullying prevention has occurred in foreign countries. According to the Center for Study and Prevention of Violence, the United States did not begin to address ways to deal with bullying behavior until the mid-1990s when a study was implemented with 18 middle schools in South Carolina to examine the effectiveness of the Olweus' bully prevention program (Werle, 2006).

Although agreement about the definition of bullying behavior is nearly universal, myths about bullying still exist. Bullying has been seen as normal behavior or just "kiddin' around" and those who complained about being bullied were called "babies" or "sissies" (Scarpaci, 2006, p. 171 and Weiner & Miller, 2006, p. 62). However, bullying is a pattern of the same aggressive behavior and is much more than just kidding (Weiner & Miller).

*Bullying Behaviors*

All concerned would agree that bullying has serious implications and consequences for our children. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2001) states that 13% of children in grades six through ten have bullied others. DeHaan (1997) believes that bullying is purposeful behavior that lacks reason and is aimed at controlling another.

Boulton (1997) and Rigby (2006) remind us that bullying does not discriminate between ages, races, classes, religions, or genders. Some believe that children with a lower socioeconomic status may display more bullying behavior, according to Hart (as cited in McNeilly-Choque et al., 1996) Bullying behavior occurs at about the same rate in cities as in rural areas (Olweus, 2002).

### *Causes of Bullying Behavior*

Bullying is a complex behavior that may be caused by exposure to violence in the media (Gruenert, as cited in Piotrowski & Hoot, 2008) and at home (DeHaan, 1997). Children may observe bullying behavior on television and in video games and see this behavior as acceptable (Gruenert, as cited in Piotrowski & Hoot). Parents may model bullying behavior through family dynamics (DeHaan). Olweus (n.d.) also believes bullying can be caused by personalities, a tendency toward aggressive behavior, environmental factors, peers, and physical strength. Morgan (2002) says that bullies may persuade others in their group that victims may be partly responsible for "bringing the bullying on themselves" (p. 7).

### *Types of Bullying Behaviors*

Bullying can take many forms. Olweus (n.d.) lists exclusion, racial, sexual and cyber bullying as common types of bullying behaviors. Scarpaci (2006) cites three main types of bullying behavior: social, verbal, and physical.

#### *Social*

Garbarino and deLara (2003) cite a study of children from 118 different cultures that found children had a great fear of rejection. "Most human beings will pay any price to belong" (Garbarino & deLara, 2003, p. 19). They state that other psychological harm from bullying includes fear, isolation and influencing another's thinking. Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory supports the research of Garbarino and deLara when it states that behaviors observed by others can change one's thinking. He posits that one may acquire knowledge through outside influences such as social interactions, personal experiences and media. These influences may alter one's cognition and thereby affect actions and behaviors.

Hanish et al. (2004) says that when examining bullying one must consider the roles that classmates and teachers play because they are change agents in this setting. Thus, examining teachers' perceptions is important to this study.

### *Verbal*

Olweus (n.d.) also feels that bullying involves verbal abuse where bullies spread rumors and taunt the victims with name-calling. Coloroso (2008) describes verbal bullying as the most difficult to detect. Coloroso also reports that even though a victim may not hear a rumor, he or she will "still suffer from its effects" (p. 17). Communications such as "Stay away from him, he has cooties," is one example of how children may suffer alienation and not know why (Coloroso, p. 17). Hoover and Oliver (as cited in Weiner & Miller, 2006) report that teasing is the overall most prevalent form of bullying, and Scarpaci (2006) believes insulting to be one of the most frequently occurring bullying behaviors.

### *Physical implications of bullying.*

Olweus (n.d.) describes physical bullying as behavior that may manifest itself as threats of harm to another and stealing property of the victim. Scarpaci (2006) cites tripping, shoving, and pushing others as types of physical bullying that is often seen. According to Coloroso (2008) physical bullying is the most easily seen and identifiable form of bullying behavior, yet it accounts for less than one-third of all bullying behaviors. She writes that physical behaviors include "slapping, hitting, choking, poking, punching, kicking, biting, pinching, scratching, twisting limbs…and damaging or destroying clothes and property belonging to the bullied child" (Coloroso, 2008, p. 16).

### *Bullying by Gender*

Hoover and Oliver (as cited in Weiner & Miller, 2006) feel that both boys' and girls' most prevalent form of bullying is teasing, with physical abuse second in boys and with ostracism second in girls. According to Click and Grotpeter (as cited in Crick, Casas, & Mosher, 1997), girls are more likely to bully by using relational aggression, which targets social relationships. Relational aggression is manifested by shunning, whispering about another, mocking, and negative rumors (Frey et. al., 2005). Boys are more likely to display overt aggression which uses physical harm against another, such as hitting, kicking, and pushing (Crick et al.). Olweus (2003) and others find that girls bully almost as often as boys, but girls are less aggressive. Ma (2001) purports that bullying in boys is more power-based.

### *Venues of Bullying Behaviors*

Bullying often happens at schools in unsupervised locations, such as hallways, restrooms, cafeterias, and playgrounds (Kasen, Johnson & Cohen, 1990; Olweus, 2002). Olweus says that playgrounds and other "non-classroom contexts" appear to be where most aggressive acts occur, perhaps because of less adult supervision there (as cited in McNeilly-Choque, et. al., 1996, p. 47). Blatchford and Sharp (1994) recommend that physical environments be evaluated as to proclivity for encouraging bullying behaviors by providing places that have little opportunity for adult observation.

Bullying can take place in the home where parents may often let children work out their own conflicts or model bullying behavior. In a study done by Duncan (as cited in Swearer, Espelage & Napolitano, 2009) with 336 middle schoolers with siblings, 42% reported that they were often bullied by their siblings and 77% of bully victims reported also bullying their siblings. This is a frightening statistic and demonstrates the need for parental education and

partnerships with schools. Schools must include families in their efforts to address bullying (Howard, Flora, & Griffin, 1999).

## *Bullies*

### *Characteristics*

Olweus (as cited in Entenman et al., 2005) tells us that contrary to what others may believe, bullies are secure in themselves and have less anxiety than their victims. Bullies like to feel superior, like to have power over others and like to use their power to hurt others (Scarpaci, 2006). Most bullies are popular with their peers (DeHaan, 1997) and have an inflated sense of self-confidence (Piotrowski & Hoot, 2008). These same authors agree that bullies use their popularity and social skills to help them get away with bullying behaviors. McNamee and Mercurio (2008) describe bullies as good at talking themselves out of trouble and blaming their victims. A bully appears to have a lack of empathy for the victim and feels that bullying is just a game (Frey et al., 2005).

Ma (2001) adds the following additional characteristics that tend to describe children who bully: 1) poor parenting (hostile parents who may reject them), 2) history of aggressive behavior, and 3) physical strength. Beane (2005) believes that bullies need help from adults as much as the victims. Bullies are more likely to be “maladjusted than their non-relationally aggressive peers” (Crick et al., 1997, p. 579). DeHaan (as cited in Entenman et al., 2005) reports that bullies have a hard time maintaining relationships and are more likely to use drugs and alcohol.

Swearer and Espelage (as cited in Hanish et al., 2004), in their study of 167 preschool and kindergarten students, found that bullies exhibited three types of aggressive behaviors: 1) reactive aggression, 2) proactive aggression, and 3) relational aggression. Reactive aggression is seen when a child strikes back after being teased or threatened. Proactive aggression is

demonstrated when a child gets other children to help him or her bully someone she or he doesn't like. Lastly, relational aggression occurs when one party threatens another that they will, for example, not be invited to their birthday party unless the person does what the bully tells them to do.

*Long-Range Consequences*

Bullies are not only a serious threat to their peers, but evidence shows that bullying behavior continues into adulthood. Most researchers agree that children who bully tend to grow up to be adults who bully and victims may turn into bullies at some point in order to get revenge. Olweus (as cited in Scarpaci, 2006) has found that bullies show more violent behavior as they get older and often come from a background of being bullied themselves. Suderman, Jaffe, and Schieck (as cited in Entenman et al., 2005) agree and tell us that bullies tend to become aggressive adults who have a higher propensity for criminal behavior. A bully is four times more likely to be convicted of a serious crime by age 24 (Center for the Study and Prevention of Crime, as cited in Piotrowski & Hoot, 2008; Olweus, as cited in Piotrowski & Hoot, 2008). According to Fried and Fried (as cited in Weiner & Miller, 2006), who surveyed adults, by the time a bully reaches 30 years old, the "effects of being a bully are still evident" and 25% of bullies have a criminal record (p. 63).

*Victims*

*Characteristics*

In a study of 11,000 students from 54 elementary schools, in Norway, Olweus (2003) found that victimization of students had increased by almost 50% from l983 until 2001. Olweus (2003) describes victims as: 1) passive or submissive victim or 2) aggressive victim or bully-victim. The passive victim accounts for about 80-85% of victims, according to Olweus (2003).

He tells us that the behavior of aggressive victims may cause negative reactions from a large part of the classroom population. Bullying victims may carry anger and fear with them for years, possibly becoming angry adults.

Ma (2001) and Piotrowski and Hoot (2008) describe victims of bullying as having few friends, low self-esteem, and a fear of negative peer evaluation. Christie (2005) adds that victims lack social self-defense skills. Ma posits that victims often look different than their peers in some way, such as wearing glasses, having different clothes, or having different dialects or speech problems. Morgan (2002), too, believes that victims are singled out because they do not "conform to the standards" of the group (p. 7). However, Olweus (2003) disagrees with the premise that students who are different are more often victims of bullying. He says research has not been conclusive on this theory thus far. Flynt, Morton, Norwich, Kelly and Whitney (as cited in Weiner & Miller, 2006) have found that children with disabilities are "often targeted by bullies" (p. 64).

According to Olweus (2002), and Smith and Brain (2000), many researchers believe that bullying involves an imbalance in power (as cited in Frey et. al., 2005). This imbalance in power can create a group of victims that are often considered outside the mainstream. Becoming a member of this less powerful group, a child may feel ostracized from his peers and devalued. Exclusion from social groups exerts power over those who yearn to belong and be accepted (Thompson, Grace, and Cohen, 2001). These same authors also say this segregation may be powerful enough to change a child's perception of himself. Educators need to be concerned with how bullying may fragment a portion of the classroom population. Coloroso (2008) believes that young children who "haven't developed a strong sense of self are the most susceptible" to bullying (p. 15). Sanders and Phye (2008) report that bullying involves an imbalance of power

when victims cannot easily defend themselves because of being physically smaller or being outnumbered.

Feeling that they have little or no support or power, children are hesitant to ask for help. Most victims feel powerless to do anything to stop the bullying (Frey et al., 2005). Children who are victims often feel afraid of retaliation if they tell an adult and are not confident the adult will help them (Coloroso, 2008).

Hoover and Oliver (as cited in Weiner & Miller, 2006, and Ma, 2001) believe that young people whose parents are overprotective, lack social skills or are over involved with their child's life tend to be victims of bullying. DeHaan (as cited in Entenman et al., 2005) says that parents can empower their children who are victims by creating a safe home environment, teaching them not to hit or fight back, and reinforcing that the attack is not the victim's fault.

*Long-Range Consequences*

Those who are bullied often get depressed, lose a feeling of security, feel isolated, lose self-esteem, drop out of school, and have difficulty with relationships (Hallford et al., 2006; Nansel et al., 2001). Beane (2005) and Hallford et al. (2006) believe that bullying victims often develop physical symptoms such as stuttering, aches, anxiety, mood swings, and thoughts of suicide. Recent suicides of students such as Jaheem Herrera, an eleven-year-old boy in DeKalb County, Georgia, have been attributed to bullying, confirming the above arguments (Walker, 2010). Arseneault et al. (2006) conducted a national study in the United Kingdom of 2,232 children ages five and seven and found that being victims of bullying, especially in the first years of schooling, can cause children to be maladjusted in the area of pro-social behavior.

*Bystanders*

Bullying rarely occurs in isolation (Esch, 2008). According to Craig and Pepler (as cited in Beran, 2006) and Piotrowski and Hoot (2008), bullying occurs in front of peers about 85% of the time, but peers only come to the victims' aid about 11% of the time for fear they may be the next victim. They feel that adults need to assure bystanders that they will receive help from the adults if they report the bullying. "Children who observe violent behavior and see that it has no negative consequences for the bully will be more likely to use aggression in the future" (Entenman et al., 2005, p. 355).

Bystanders (those who witness bullying as it occurs) may be hesitant to report bullying behavior if it comes from someone they like (Veenstra, Lindenberg, Oldehinkel, DeWinter, & Verhulst, 2005). It is probable that the bystander feels conflicted (Coloroso, 2008). Bystanders don't know what to do (Frey et. al., 2005). Rivers, Poteat, Noret, and Ashurst (2009) feel that being a bystander may be as psychologically traumatic as actually being bullied.

Bystanders are also intimidated by powerful groups. Children aspire to belong to a peer group and sometimes will adopt a new mentality or set of values in order to remain an insider (Coloroso, 2008). "Groups are so important to children that it is difficult for them to act as freethinking, empathic individuals when they are part of one" (Thompson et al., 2001).

*Schools*

Children's attitudes and behaviors are shaped by many different contextual systems, such as school, community, family, and peers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, as cited in Espelage & Swearer, 2004). In a 2003 School Survey on Crime and Safety done by the National Center for Education, researchers found that during the 1999-2000 school year 29% of schools declared that bullying was their greatest problem (Christie, 2005). Newman et al. (2000) feel it is critical that victims of

bullies have full support from their schools, including teachers, counselors, and principals. Siris and Osterman (2004) say that when school is not a positive experience some of the students will withdraw while others will become aggressive. Prevention of bullying cannot be effective without participation from the entire school community (Werle, 2006).

Schools have a responsibility to keep students safe, yet it can be difficult to convince school boards and administrators to allocate sufficient funds to address the bullying issue (Werle, 2006). Howard et al. (1999) report that schools continually face decreases in funding. This trend is especially true in light of recent economic trends. However, even a modestly successful program of prevention and awareness can have a big effect on students (Frey et. al., 2005).

Olweus' research indicates that the best cure for bullying behavior is to inform students of the nature of bullying and to empower them with skills to cope with bullying behavior (Carpenter, 2005). Some states are now requiring schools to have anti-bullying programs. With the No Child Left Behind initiative, Oklahoma has enacted a bill that requires all schools to address bullying with a specific bullying program (Hallford et al., 2006). In Georgia, the state can withhold funds if a district does not adopt an anti-bullying policy (Christie, 2005). Georgia also requires that any student found guilty of bullying for the third time must be sent to an alternative school (Christie).

*Teachers*

The majority of researchers agree that teachers play an integral part in preventing bullying behaviors in schools. Scarpaci (2006) states that teacher intervention is necessary in order to end bullying. According to Yoon and Kerber (2003) teachers play an important role in setting a positive school climate. Therefore, it is important to study teachers' perceptions of occurrences of bullying in their students.

Craig, Pepler, and Atlas (2000) believe that school climate is becoming an important factor in influencing bullying behavior. The teacher's role is of primary importance in the daily interactions of the classroom. "Whether teachers intend to or not, they teach values" (Inlay, 2003, p. 69). Bond (2010) emphasizes that teachers are role models simply due to the nature of their jobs. Yoon and Kerber (2003) believe that some teachers actually model bullying behavior in the classroom by demonstrating a lack of respect and care of their students. Siris and Osterman (2004) say educators hold the key to controlling and preventing bullying in schools.

Mishna et al. (2006) found in a study of teachers at four urban elementary schools that teachers were unaware of ten out of seventeen students who were being bullied. "The finding that many teachers were unaware that their students were bullied is cause for concern, and is supported in the literature" (Hanish & Guerra and Newman, Murra, & Lussier, as cited in Mishna et al., 2006, p. 729). Hanish et al. (2004) cite a study done by Atlas and Pepler of a public elementary school in Toronto where teachers were only aware of 25% of bullying cases. It will take awareness and a commitment from teachers to remove bullying from schools. Therefore, one cannot underestimate the importance of the classroom teacher. Through teacher efforts, bullying and victimization of individual students have been minimized in classrooms (Siris & Osterman, 2004).

Siris and Osterman (2004) report that teachers can no longer ignore bullying behaviors as many have done in the past. Frey et al. (2005) believe that currently teachers intervene only about 15% to 18% of the time and because of this, students may not bother reporting incidents to their teachers. Children are sometimes more tolerant of bullying behavior as the year progresses, perhaps because nothing was being done by adults to stop the behavior (Frey et. al.). The social cognitive theory of Bandura (1986) states that an individual will gather knowledge by observing

others' actions in a social context and will imitate them. Therefore, when students see a lack of negative consequences for bullying behavior they may attempt it, also.

Teachers may not intervene because they overlook bullying behavior (since it is often done out of the teacher's view), they misinterpret the behavior, or they may be unsure of what to do and feel threatened themselves (Beran, 2006). According to Espelage and Swearer (2008), it is hard for teachers to intervene with bullies because the children may switch between being a bully and being the victim (Beran). Teachers may also feel unprepared and helpless due to a lack of training (Entenman et al., 2005). Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2002) reported that most teachers and staff felt untrained and insecure with new prevention programs, so education is a needed, but sometimes neglected ingredient of a successful implemention.

Teachers need to make it clear that bullying behavior will not be tolerated in class or in the school (Olweus, 2002). Teachers must provide the needed protection for victims of bullies (Olweus, 2002). Lack of teacher support has been known to increase bullying behavior in students (Barboza et al., 2009).

Bond (2010), a high school principal who witnessed a school shooting where the shooter was a victim of bullying, believes that the culture of his school contributed to the cause of this shooting. He feels that less emphasis should have been placed on achievement and more concern focused on school environment. Bond also says that teachers must always respond to suspected bullying behavior and let students know that bullying is not acceptable behavior.

*Summary*

Educators need to help their students understand the nature of bullying and actions to protect themselves from it. Teachers can read books and have open class discussions about characters in the book rather than talking about specific students (Entenman et al., 2005).

Teachers can role-play ways students can deal with hurtful situations (Scarpaci, 2006). According to Beran (2006) and Noddings (2005a), developing and enforcing classroom rules together where students listen to others' ideas instills respect for others, creates a more caring community, and equips bystanders with ways to help those being bullied. Training children in interpersonal skills may help to develop socially responsible behavior in the bystanders which might reduce bullying at school (Frey et. al., 2005). Coloroso (2008) says children must be "guided" to behave as caring and responsible people (p. 140).

*Curriculum*

Thornton (2001) purports that curriculum should provide a meaningful connection between interests and capacities of pupils in order for them to feel valued. When a teacher is honestly concerned for students, the curriculum will be student-driven (Noddings, 2005a). Dewey (1938) believed that teachers should start with students' interests and experiences in order to forge a connection between their experiences and the subject matter. "…[I]t is a professional truism that students are individuals and must be treated as such if we expect to optimize their motivation and learning" (Good & Brophy, 2008, p. 261). Noddings (2005a) states that educators who are devoted to their students will "design multiple curricula" as they respond to the needs and interests of individual students. Glasser (as cited in Thompson & McAlpine, 2006) agrees with Noddings. He says that teachers should seek student input when planning lessons and that students should be managed by a caring attitude rather than coercion. Gardner's (2003) eight intelligences provide support for considering each child's needs when planning instruction. With increased student engagement and group activities, opportunities for bullying may be minimized.

Universal curricula seem to demonstrate a lack of caring and a feeling of "coercion" (Katz, Noddings, & Strike, 1999, p. 13). According to Noddings (2005a), schools should favor a theory of differentiated curricula because as teachers work closely with students they will be moved by their unique interests and needs. "The paradigm use of care should remain tied to caring for the other as a distinct *individual*" (Katz et al., p. 142). Students may gain competence in certain subject areas because they feel others care for them (Thornton, 2001).

Noddings (2005a) purports that education should "aim to encourage growth of competent, caring, loving, and lovable people" (p. xiv). Bullying behavior may not survive in such a cohesive, supportive classroom environment. Coloroso (2008) agrees with Noddings and says educators must move to a more caring classroom atmosphere. She continues by saying that with "care and commitment" one may redirect bullying behaviors into "positive leadership activities" (p.202).

*Young Children and Bullying*

While more attention has recently been given to the topic of bullying, one student population appears to be neglected. With a plethora of information available on bullying, there is very little research concerning the study of bullying in young children (Crick, Casas, & Mosher, 1997). A minimum amount of research has been conducted with students in the preschool and primary grades (Coie, Dodge, Terry, & Wright, 1991, as cited in Freeman, Hooks, & Hinton, 2008). Yet, according to Beane (2005), bullying tends to begin in preschool. Esch (2008) says that young children can be easy targets for bullying.

Randall (as cited in Wartik, 2001), a professor and bullying expert at the University of Hull in England, states that children can be considered bullies by the ages of four and five. Freeman et al. (2008), too, found that bullying behavior was present in kindergarten-aged

children. And after a study of first through fourth graders, Pepler (as cited in Wartik, 2001) feels that younger children can suffer more than older ones. Lack of research in this area is unfortunate because early detection of aggressive behavioral patterns may help in the prevention and treatment of adjustment problems in young children (McNeilly-Choque et al., 1996). "The earlier children learn not to bully, then the better," according to Sager, an educational consultant (as cited in Wartik, 2001, p. 81).

*Aggression in Young Children*

Olweus (as cited in Carpenter, 2005) says that aggressive children of three years old will remain aggressive unless intervention occurs. "Assessment of relational aggression may play an important role in early detection of children's adjustment difficulties" (Crick et al., 1997, p. 587). Aggressive children are at risk for involvement in bullying (Hanish et al., 2004). Swearer & Espelage did research with 167 children in preschool and kindergarten and found that at least one aggressive behavior was found in 93, representing 55.7% or over half of these children (as cited in Hanish et al.)

Crick et al. (1997) found that both overt and relational aggression is shown to be related to high levels of peer rejection in preschoolers. These same authors believe that relationally aggressive behavior appears in children aged three to five years old and is associated with social-psychological maladjustment. Crick et al. also believe that both overt and relational aggression are related to low levels of pro-social behavior evidenced in activities such as sharing and helping others. Price, Telljohann, Dake, and Marsico (as cited in Werle, 2006, p. 157) purport that while violent behavior "peaks at 16-17 years of age," the use of violence is learned much earlier and is evident during the early elementary years.

*Peer Influence in Young Children*

Children learn to bully each other from their peers (Swearer, et al., 2009). “Peers influence attitudes and behaviors by acting as role models” (Kaplan, Johnson, Bailey, 1987, as cited in Hanish & Rodkin, 2007, p. 61). Children learn quickly that overpowering someone can bring about the accomplishment of one’s own personal goals (Esch, 2008).

Alsaker & Valkanover (as cited in Hanish et al., 2004) remind us that some peer-directed aggression is common in preschool children. Hanish et al. (2004) point out that there is some difficulty and controversy when attempting to label unprovoked aggression toward weaker children as bullying. Therefore, they recommend concentrating on the frequency of the aggressive behaviors toward one child. Olweus (n.d.) also sheds light on ways to ascertain bullying from aggressive socialization behaviors. He suggests that one examine behaviors to see if they are purposeful, negative behaviors directed at one child in a repetitive nature where an imbalance of power exists between the two children.

Increasing opportunities for students to get to know each other will improve peer relationships and afford more support for victims. According to Noddings (2005a), “Peers play an integral role in the social development of children…” (Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009, p. 17). Espelage & Swearer (2004) purport that peer groups socialize members which may include socializing for aggressive behaviors. Thus, positive peer relationships are crucial. Students who perceive greater peer support tend to be uninvolved in bullying (Demaray & Malecki, 2004). Siris & Osterman (2004) believe that good relationships with peers will serve to encourage students to become more active in classroom activities which will eventually build confidence. “Peers can be a great support by modeling pro-social behavior and caring attitudes” (Swearer et al., 2009, p. 19).

*Conceptual Framework*

"Caring is important" (Siris & Osterman, 2004, p. 291). Demonstrating their care by using modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation (see Figure 2), instructors will create an improved learning environment where students feel safe and are willing to take risks and make mistakes; thus, improving the climate for learning (Noddings, 2005a).

It is beneficial to this research to investigate whether teachers include Noddings' tenets of care in their discussions about perceptions of bullying since these tenets are included in most bullying prevention programs. Therefore, evidence of these tenets in a teacher's practice may indicate that she is acting to discourage bullying (whether she is aware of it or not) by creating a caring classroom culture. The researcher will use Noddings' four tenets of care as she examines the data for themes and patterns.

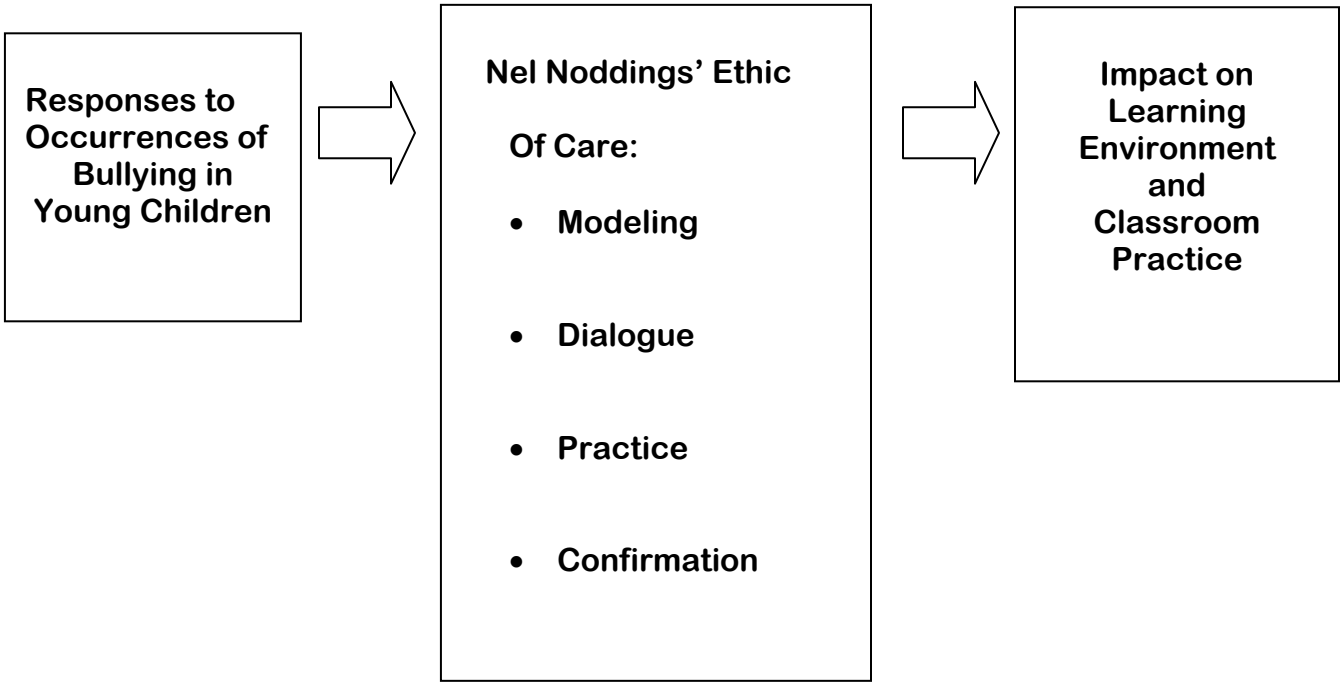


Figure 2. Application of Nel Noddings' Ethic of Care to Study (Noddings, 2005a, p.22)

*Modeling*

Noddings (2005a) states that educators must show with their actions what it means to care for students. How one behaves may create a model through which another may grow to become a better person (Shapiro & Purpel, 2004). A teacher must model an attitude of caring defined not only by her feelings, but the feelings of the cared-for person (Noddings, 2005a); caring is not something one "does" to another. Noddings also says that the care giver and the care recipient must have a connection and reciprocity. Students must feel valued personally and not think that they are just a test score. Olweus (2003) says one of the bullying prevention principles involves creating an environment that is warm, with adults who show positive interest. Olweus also states that by using bullying prevention strategies such as a caring environment, the classroom climate will change so that there are fewer opportunities and rewards for bullying.

When bullying is detected, teachers may use modeling to assist victims with ways to neutralize bullies (Scarpaci, 2006). "The use of intimidation and victimization can be reduced in classrooms where teachers model caring and trust, and victims are assured that adults will come in their defense if needed" (Espelage & Swearer, 2004, p. 178.) Teachers in Siris & Osterman's (2004) study found that by modeling positive interactions, positive peer relationships improved in students.

*Dialogue*

One could not model caring behavior without engaging in dialogue, an important part of demonstrating care. Dialogue can be used to engage people to think about caring. When one participates in a dialogue, one must be a good listener. Coloroso (2008) tells us that "kids won't say a word if they think their telling will be met with judgmental statements…" so she admonishes keeping the "lines of communication and listening open" (p. 136). Siris and

Osterman (2004) found that listening and spending time with students produced an increased sense of belonging in the classroom. Students are more likely to “cooperate with others and look toward the common good” when schools meet their needs for “significance and belonging” (Inlay, 2003, p.71).

Siris & Osterman (2004) studied a small group of fourth grade teachers who identified students who were being bullied. These researchers found that children need to feel a sense of belonging. In a recent live webinar, Bond (2010) stated that the most important thing a teacher can do to prevent bullying is instill in students a sense of belonging or connection to a school that demonstrates they care for them. School should be a welcoming place where each child receives his or her fair share of care. These authors agree with Noddings’ (2005a) benefits of practicing caring in the classroom.

Being a victim of bullying can destroy a child’s feeling of security and take away the joy of coming to school (Nansel et al., 2001). Victims may develop a lack of interest in school, ask to stay home or drop out of school (Beane, 2005; Hallford et al., 2006).Tragedies from bullying are illustrated by the suicide of Tyler Clements, a Rutgers’ freshman, who jumped off the George Washington Bridge into the Hudson River as a result of being bullied by his roommate (Tresniowski et al., 2010). These authors point out that this suicide represents at least four known deaths related to bullying in the United States alone in the last two months.

Teachers can demonstrate care by having conversations with students during transition times that might otherwise be frightening (Cooper & Snell, 2003). Siris and Osterman (2004) say that caring helps create a sense of trust and understanding. Siris and Osterman also believe that talking through situations helps students to understand consequences for their behaviors and to consider positive alternatives. They feel that after students receive positive attention and caring

from teachers, the students' self-esteem increased and students were happier. Coloroso (2008) states that the better the students feel about themselves, the less they will "succumb to the tactics of a bully" (p. 139).

Noddings (2005a) advises that teachers be receptive to students' concerns. She says that with dialogue teachers learn the needs, interests, and talents of students and learn how to create more appropriate lesson plans. According to Singer, Murphy, and Hofstra, (2003), Noddings' theory of care involves a connection to students and their experiences. With close individual relationships, teachers are better able to uncover emotional distress that would signal the presence of bullying. A study done by Siris and Osterman (2004) of students and teachers in grades one through six indicated that teachers were able to clearly see the importance of personal relationships even with students in their classroom who had already been bullied. These close relationships "allowed teachers to be more aware and sensitive to the students' needs…" (Siris & Osterman, 2004, p. 290).

*Practice*

Children need to have the chance to interact in a caring way with their peers. Noddings (2005a) says that if we want to produce people who will care for another, then it makes sense to give students practice in caring. Coloroso (2008) states that children need the "opportunity to develop their abilities to listen, exchange ideas and work with others toward a common goal" (p. 145).

Fox and Boulton (2005) affirm that poor social skills may put children at an increased risk of being victimized. The more positive support the teachers gave to bullying victims the more "supportive and accepting" the students became (Siris & Osterman, 2004, p. 290). Chang (2003) found that "teacher warmth" toward students had a positive effect on "enhancing peer

acceptance" (p. 543). According to Noddings (2005a), caring provides students with a more positive outlook on school and encourages relationships. Relationships with teachers and their students could shape peer-related functioning at school (Espelage & Swearer, 2004).

Glasser (2006) reminds us that one of the basic needs of every student is belonging. Belonging requires that one is connected to his world and is with people who know and care about him. According to Siris and Osterman (2004), students felt a sense of belonging in the classroom when teachers allowed the students to spend more time together. When teachers structure more shared-learning activities, they provide opportunities for their students to practice caring for one another. Students should be given opportunities to practice tolerance in the classroom in order to enhance social skills (Doll & Cummings, 2008). Strategies that raise collective efficacy of a classroom's students may reduce the number of potential victims available for bullying (Espelage & Swearer, 2004).

Noddings (2005a) purports that experiences in which we immerse ourselves tend to shape our minds. "Attitudes and 'mentalities' are shaped at least in part by experience" (Noddings, 2005a, p. 23). Therefore, students need to immerse themselves in a practice of caring about their peers to create a mentality of support and unity.

Noddings (as cited in Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou, 2004) and Bandura (1986) also believe that our thinking is influenced by our experiences with others. Therefore, students need time and occasion to reflect on ways of caring for fellow students. In schools, students should be encouraged to collaborate and help one another and not just in order to improve academic performance (Shapiro & Purpel, 2004). The more we get to know one another, the better able we are to understand each other and build relationships.

*Confirmation*

Noddings' works tend to support Buber's (as cited in Smith, 2004) description of confirmation as finding and affirming the best in others. Teachers who encourage a caring atmosphere in the classroom are likely to find that their students look for the positives in their classmates. One who affirms another will recognize something praiseworthy in each person (Noddings, 2005a). When affirming another, one must know that person reasonably well (Noddings, 2005a). Peer relationships are nurtured as students get to know each other better and develop a fondness for each other. Care naturally involves appreciating another's capacities (Thornton, 2001). Noddings (2005a) feels that too many schools do not nurture students and their diversity. Thus schools fail to speak to students' real needs and fail to nurture their growth (Noddings, 2005a).

According to Siris and Osterman (2004), teachers reduced incidences of peer harassment by structuring a climate where students could not be excluded. This atmosphere was established through initiatives such as providing more activities that allowed students to get to know each other and developing a classroom rule that says "anyone is welcome in any group" (p. 290). Espelage and Swearer (2004) also say with the implementation of new rules, teachers noticed that students were more supportive of each other. Bandura (as cited in Ormrod, 2008) believes that collective self-efficacy depends not only on one's perception of his or her own and others' capabilities, but how effectively they can work together. Self-efficacy may promote student empowerment that would combat bullying attempts.

*Summary of Conceptual Framework*

Noddings (2005a) believes strongly that education is more than academics. She says that it is a moral obligation to teach our students to be caring and responsible citizens. Noddings

(2005a) states that this "moral education has four components: 1) modeling, 2) dialogue, 3) practice, and 4) confirmation" (p. 22). She asserts that if educators follow these tenets of ethical caring, students will develop a more caring attitude toward their classmates. She believes that students will be more easily motivated by care (and wanting not to disappoint) rather than fear of punishment for poor behavior. By establishing an emphasis on individual caring relationships and a differentiated curriculum, Noddings declares that teachers will create a more nurturing classroom. Coloroso (2008) believes that with a more nurturing environment, students will be less likely to bully others. Therefore, Noddings' Ethic of Care was chosen as the conceptual framework for the investigation of how bibliotherapeutic intervention affected teachers' perceptions of occurrences of bullying behavior in their students aged four and five.

*Prevention*

Noddings' (2005a) tenets may also serve as a framework for bullying prevention in the classroom. A caring teacher acts like "we are somebody" (Deiro, 2003, p. 60). Goodlad (1984, 2004) agrees that schools should be "a nurturing, caring place" (p. 62). There are many prevention and intervention programs available to schools. In fact, over 300 programs for bullying exist today (Espelage & Swearer, 2004). Yet as late as 2000, bullying remained a serious problem in schools (Christie, 2005).

*School Reform*

In order to effect change in our schools, one must feel a sense of urgency. Kotter (1996) states that a sense of urgency is the catalyst for change and that change is what is needed to bring about a vision. Stakeholders need to embrace the vision of bully-free schools and communities in order to bring about lasting change. According to Espelage and Swearer (2004), one key to a successful program is a commitment by all stakeholders to change the school environment and

norms regarding bullying behaviors. Bond (2010) asserts that school culture must change in order for bullying to decrease.

Goodlad (1984, 2004) insists that change in schools must be done through a united effort of the community of stakeholders. He goes on to say that "education is too important and too all-encompassing to be left only to schools" (p. 46). He continues to advocate for "maximization of the educational resources of entire communities…" (p. 92). Mayer and Leone (as cited in Werle, 2006, p. 156) believe that the most effective approach to school safety is building a "sense of community and collective responsibility."

Most researchers agree that in order to successfully lessen occurrences of bullying behavior, schools will need comprehensive plans involving more than just teachers and administrators. Leff, Power, and Goldstein (2004) tell us that no single method is sufficient for determining the effects of bullying intervention programs. Researchers must work with administrators to determine which combination of methods might provide the most comprehensive, feasible outcome for their individual schools (Soriano, Soriano, & Jimenez, 1994, as cited in Espelage & Swearer, 2004). Chase (as cited in Espelage & Swearer, 2008) and Morgan (2002) agree and say that one must change the entire school climate in order to reduce bullying behavior.

Parents can help when informed about classroom rules regarding bullying and can discourage the use of aggression through family conversations (Espelage & Swearer, 2004). These authors also state that children who feel unsuccessful, powerless, or uncared for will eventually disengage in school. Espelage and Swearer (2004) say that while some students were slow to participate with peers with newly established rules and exhibited little skill in social

relationships, teachers found that given time these students' attitudes changed. Socially, students were more comfortable and more outgoing.

Schools have children for a great part of their day and play a crucial role in reaching these students. Howard, Flora, and Griffin (1999) believe school to be a most opportune setting for learning about pro-social behavior. They feel that schools should integrate violence-prevention strategies into curricula, school services, policies and staff training. Sampson, et al. (as cited in Howard et al., 1999) found that a connectedness to school does reduce violence. Thompson and McAlpine (2006) state that students with "strong school ties" are less likely to be "influenced by dangerous elements," are more resilient, and are less likely to "create dangerous situations in schools" (p. 2).

Bullying increases in schools with unsupportive environments (Barboza et al., 2009). Bullying occurs in different forms in different classrooms (Swearer et al., 2009). Thus, all interventions should include a classroom component (Howard et al., 1999). When the school climate ignores bullying behavior, the bully may receive positive reinforcement for his/her behavior and may be encouraged to continue this behavior (Craig et al., 2000). Unfortunately many schools ignore or dismiss daily incidents of bullying (Siris & Osterman, 2004).

Espelage & Swearer (2004) say that it is easier to change the environment than the child. However, they also point out that in order to truly change the environment, support and understanding is needed from teachers. Teachers are certainly the glue that secures the classroom and the bullying intervention program together. Cuban (2007) states that "teachers are the gatekeepers to school and classroom improvements" (p. 106). So, teachers' perceptions, motivation and beliefs come into play when new policies are being considered.

In the research by Siris and Osterman (2004), teachers realized that children who were victims had fewer opportunities to stand out or shine in the classroom than their peers. Thus, these children found it harder to build confidence or a feeling of competency and self-efficacy. These same teachers noticed that contrary to their own perceptions, there were few times these students were able to act autonomously in the classroom. As a result of this data, they began to plan more activities where students shared learning activities in order to encourage students to get to know each other. Siris and Osterman also feel that by examining and modifying their classroom practices, teachers may make a difference in the lives of their students.

*Bibliotherapy*

Bibliotherapy is one method found in research that is used to assist students in identifying and preventing bullying as well as modeling compassion for others as Noddings might advocate in her Ethic of Care. Bibliotherapy, such as is used in this study, is defined as "using books to help people solve problems" (Gregory & Vessey, 2004, p. 128). Forgan (2002) reports that "teachers can use children's literature to help students solve problems and generate alternative responses to their issues" (p. 75). And indeed, Gregory and Vessey (2004), Morgan (2002) and Esch (2008) recommend using bibliotherapy when addressing bullying. In the fall of 2010, Rozalski, Stewart, and Miller touted the benefits of using "carefully selected thematic books" to "reach students experiencing difficult situations" (p. 33). Esch believes that literature may cultivate connections with characters and their emotions that may help prevent children from becoming victims. Gregory and Vessey (2004) also go on to say that bibliotherapy is "…useful for communicating information about teasing and bullying, helping children learn empathy for one another, and providing them with strategies for deflecting or minimizing bullying attempts" (p. 127). These authors believe that bibliotherapy helps children when working through difficult

situations by providing examples of others who are coping with "similar problems" (p. 128). Aiex (1993) agrees with the above authors and goes on to say that bibliotherapy is suggested for the following reasons:

1) to develop an individual's self-concept
2) to increase an individual's understanding of human behavior or motivations
3) to foster an individual's honest self-appraisal
4) to provide a way for a person to find interests outside of self
5) to relieve emotional or mental pressure
6) to show an individual that he or she is not the first or only person to encounter such a problem
7) to show an individual that there is more than one solution to a problem
8) to help a person discuss a problem more freely
9) to help an individual plan a constructive course of action to solve a problem (p. 2)

Bibliotherapy is the use of literature to help people solve problems (Forgan, 2002). In years past, bibliotherapy has been used successfully by educators to solve various problems with their students. Teachers routinely use books to assist children with varied concerns such as how to deal with a learning disability, how to improve self-esteem, or how to increase knowledge of human interactions (Forgan, 2002). Bibliotherapy involves three stages for children when interacting with the literature: 1) identification, 2) catharsis, and 3) insight (Gregory & Vessey, 2004). These authors espouse identification as a critical piece when using bibliotherapy. They say that children are able to recognize situations similar to their own through fictional characters in the literature. Gregory and Vessey go on to say that when students are able to identify with a character and the events in the text, they will become emotionally involved with the story and develop connections with this character. Lastly, Gregory and Vessey discuss insight as the final stage in bibliotherapeutic intervention. According to these authors, insight happens when a child realizes he or she has a problem similar to one of the story characters. Thus, after an awareness

of the problem, the student may begin the process of problem solving. Forgan (2002) believes that with the use of bibliotherapy a student may become a proactive problem solver since the literature often provides the reader with useful strategies to combat problems such as bullying.

*Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*

Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, which was developed in Norway by Dan Olweus in 1983, is one of the most "widely used" and "best-researched" prevention programs for bullying in use in schools today (Espelage & Swearer, 2004, p. 352.) The program's goals are to: 1) reduce existing bullying problems in schools, 2) prevent the development of new bullying problems in schools, and 3) improve peer relations at school (Espelage & Swearer, 2004; Olweus, n.d.). These goals are accomplished through activities at four levels: 1) school; 2) individuals; 3) classroom; and 4) community (Olweus, n.d.). At each level Olweus (n.d.) has specific activities such as conducting surveys and training throughout the school; supervising student activities and meeting with individual students; establishing classroom rules and classroom meetings; and developing a partnership with community members. Olweus' program seeks a united effort from the entire school and advocates a school environment of "warmth, positive interest, and involvement on the part of adults" (Espelage & Swearer, 2004, p. 353). These authors also point out that there are no time limits to this prevention initiative and each school is able to focus on its own individual needs.

*Families*

The importance of the home atmosphere and its influence on students should not be overlooked. The home is "the primary educator" and the site for educational "encounters" (Noddings as cited in Smith, 2004, p. 4). Families play an important role in establishing value systems for their children. "Families are major socialization agents for young children" (Swearer

et al., 2009, p. 20). Families are highly involved in learning and acquiring aggressive or violence-prevention behaviors (Bandura as cited in Howard, Flora & Griffin, 1999); thus, schools must include families in their efforts to address bullying. Swearer et al. (2009) also believe that not only is family involvement likely to reinforce classroom instruction, but it is likely that parenting skills will improve as well. Intervention efforts are more effective when parents are aware of them and engaged in efforts to improve peer interactions and their children's experiences in the classroom (Doll & Cummings, 2008).

*Communities*

Schools can link parents with bullying prevention programs sponsored by other agencies, too, such as boys and girls clubs, thereby creating a cohesive unit of support for children. With this supportive unit, there may be an increase in willingness of the community to intervene on behalf of others when faced with violent behaviors (Sampson, Raudenbush & Earls, 1997, as cited in Howard et al., 1999). Howard et al. believe that a community connection is especially helpful for children with poor role models, little adult supervision and lack of after-school activities. Malecki and Demaray (2004) state that middle school bullies and victims receive less social support from their parents and could profit from additional support from the community.

The community may benefit from a cohesive unit in many ways, too. Most members of the community are connected to the school in one way or another, as a parent, employee or friend of an employee of the school, a grandparent, or parent of a former student (Howard et al., 1999). School programs may increase community awareness and decrease violence in the neighborhoods. Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls (as cited in Howard et al., 1999) purport that factors such as neighborhood cohesiveness reduce violence. Communities can link with citizen task forces and use the media to promote anti-violence messages. While the media may

contribute to aggressive and violent behavior through their portrayal of violence, media has also been used as a powerful outlet for promoting pro-social behaviors (Wallack, Dorfman, Jernigan & Themba, 1993, as cited in Howard et al., 1999). The recent involvement of *Cartoon Network* in educating children about bullying is one example of how media may be used in a positive manner (Stop Bullying, Speak Up, 2010).

*Summary of Prevention*

Bullying awareness and prevention is of utmost importance in the majority of research. Freeman et al. (2008) points out that there is a critical need for early intervention strategies for all teachers. Training children in interpersonal skills may help develop socially responsible behavior which may reduce bullying at school (Frey et al., 2005). Educators have an obligation to address the issue of bullying with information obtained from current research which includes involvement from all stakeholders (Werle, 2006).

Smith, Schneider, Smith and Ananiadou (2004) suggest that while anti-bullying programs are not always effective, nothing has proven better than a whole-school approach where school policies, classroom curriculum, and staff development are involved. Most would agree with Espelage and Swearer (2004) when they say that prevention is much better than intervention.

This vision of a safe, bully-free environment for our children can only take place when people work together. Administrators must locate dedicated, key leaders in each sector of the population. Collins (2001), in his book, *Good to Great*, stresses the importance of getting the right people for the right job. Espelage and Swearer (2008) declare that a true prevention program will involve partnerships between the school and the community. This researcher hopes to add to the research available that addresses bullying in young children and, thereby, create an improved learning environment for our youngest students.

*Research Paradigm*

A research paradigm is described by Lincoln and Guba (2000) as a set of beliefs that guide the researcher's actions. The paradigm chosen for this research is social constructivism as the researcher examines teachers' perceptions of bullying, a phenomenon leading to changes in classroom interactions involving students' power and control (Creswell, 2009). Given the uncertain nature of human interactions, this research calls for a naturalistic, interpretative approach. This study is a qualitative design since the research involves examining teachers' perceptions of the social interactions of their students. Focus groups, teacher observations, and an interview with the participating school's counselor were used as instruments to provide data.

Creswell (2007) purports that a postmodern perspective addresses hierarchies of power and control. Postmodernism is important in this research because it addresses perspectives of groups such as those represented in the culture of classroom group interactions. Negative conditions often present themselves through power struggles between individuals. This struggle for power and control over others may manifest itself in the marginalization of some children in the classroom.

Postmodernists encourage us to examine cultures from the participants' points of view (Creswell, 2007). Since bullying directly involves an imbalance of power manifested in social behavior, Creswell (2007) says it is necessary to observe these behaviors as they occur naturally in the child's world where they live and work. Teachers provide insight into these daily social interactions of their young students. Friere (1998), a postmodernist, believes that teachers must insist that a classroom function as a democracy. Yet, children often vie for their place in the classroom power structure. Students threaten and intimidate others to gain control. Other

students align with bullies to secure their place in the class hierarchy of power (Thompson et al., 2001).

Interactions of young children play an important role in their education. Dewey (1938) says that education is influenced by children's experiences. Should these experiences involve threatening behavior; students will not feel free to take risks in the classroom. Vygotsky (1978) tells us that experiences and interactions influence cognitive development. Student learning may be negatively impacted when children have lower self-esteem and self-efficacy. Freire (1998) states that in order to succeed children need interactions that foster respect and hope.

*Assumptions*

Given the apparent limited research in the area of bullying in young children, it is hoped that this study will add to the literature concerning bullying in this age group. It is also hoped that this work will increase teacher awareness of the occurrences of bullying in this younger population and will inform educators of ways in which to assist children to resist bullying behavior. This will cause a decrease in the incidences of bullying in early years so that students will not suffer from the harmful effects of bullying over several years of schooling. It is also anticipated that students will experience an increased awareness of bullying and become empowered to act on their behalf and on the behalf of others to decrease bullying behaviors in their classrooms.

The formal literature review is used to establish the existence of bullying in young children of four and five years of age and establish the limited knowledge regarding bullying in these young students. This literature review demonstrates the importance of teacher involvement in preventing bullying in young children and the lack of teacher response to these aggressive

behaviors. While more information has been evolving regarding bullying behaviors in students, little materials have surfaced regarding bullying in children as young as four and five years old.

One assumption made in this study is that most teachers care for their students and want to make their students' educational experience a pleasant and productive one. The researcher assumed that these teachers responded to the questions in the focus group with honesty and collected accurate information on the behavioral checklists. Assumptions were made that all participants clearly understood directions and were willing to follow those directions. This study assumed that focus group discussions and interviews were recorded and transcribed correctly and that the data collected accurately portrayed participants' responses. It is assumed that instruments used in this study appropriately measure what they purport to measure.

Due to the sensitive nature of bullying, this researcher had no interaction whatsoever with the students of those teachers who are participants in this study. The researcher served as facilitator for the two focus group discussions. However, the direct contact with the students was done by the counselor at the participating school. The researcher had no connection with this school other than the fact that the counselor of the participating school is also the counselor at the school at which the researcher is the principal.

*Summary*

The literature review demonstrates the magnitude of the problems presented by bullying behaviors and the devastating effects of bullying on our students. Therefore, it is imperative that we, as educators, do our utmost to improve conditions in schools so that the atmosphere is safe and conducive to learning. Research states that decreasing bullying begins with an increased awareness on the part of teachers as the people who will become advocates for our students. This study is designed to assist students with this serious problem by increasing teacher awareness of

bullying in young children, empowering teachers to action by giving them strategies and confidence to assist their students with bullying, and, as a result, inform students, school administrators, parents and the community.

# CHAPTER THREE

## Methodology

This qualitative study draws upon a phenomenological perspective, describing a common experience in the lives of teachers of young children. Creswell (2007) depicts phenomenological research as a way to delve into individual experiences to determine the overall nature of a concern. Grbich (2007) says that phenomenology allows a "refinement of consciousness…[that enables] access to the essential aspects of experiences in order to solidify our knowledge base" (p. 85). Phenomenology is used by researchers to study ways one may understand "lived experiences and the ways we understand those experiences to develop a world-view" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 104). This study should add to the limited amount of literature available regarding bullying among young children in general and the use of bibliotherapy specifically, especially in children of prekindergarten and kindergarten ages.

This study was conducted over a period of about twelve weeks during the months of March, April, and May. The study began with a focus group discussion (see Appendix A) among eight teachers of four and five year-olds. The purpose of this focus group was to ascertain a baseline of perceptions, ideas, and opinions among these teachers about bullying before bibliotherapeutic bullying intervention. The week after this initial focus group, teachers observed bullying behaviors of their students on the playground daily for two school weeks for a period of 30 minutes and recorded those observed behaviors on a checklist created by the researcher (see Appendix D). The week after these observations, the counselor at the participating school began bibliotherapeutic bullying intervention classes with each individual class of the teachers participating in this study. Each bibliotherapeutic session consisted of the counselor reading a book that informed students of some facet of bullying, such as vocabulary associated with

bullying or bullying behaviors. The counselor conducted an activity after the reading of each book. Teachers observed these interventions that occurred once a week for about 30 minutes each for a period of three weeks. The week after the last bibliotherapeutic intervention session, teachers again observed their students on the playground daily for two school weeks for 30 minutes using the same checklist used in the original observations (see Appendix E). Lastly, a second focus group (see Appendix B) was held the week following the second observations. An interview with the counselor (see Appendix F) at the participating school was completed several weeks later (due to the summer break and her unavailability). A detailed timeline is attached (see Appendix C). Data was analyzed as it was collected.

*Research Question and Design*

A qualitative phenomenological approach was used in this study to address the question of how bibliotherapeutic intervention with young children affected teachers' perceptions of bullying in their students ages four and five. Phenomenological studies are used when "rich detail of the essence of people's experiences of a phenomenon is to be explored, described, communicated…" (Grbich, 2007, p. 84). Thus this researcher used a phenomenological approach to this study in order to understand the fundamental nature of teachers' perceptions of bullying in their young students.

*Focus Groups*

Focus groups were first used around the end of World War II to examine morale of soldiers coming home, but they were not embraced by academia until the 1980s (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Need arose for a venue where a researcher could take a less dominant role and, according to Krueger and Casey, focus groups filled this need. According to these authors, focus groups were designed to listen to people and gather information about what they think and feel.

Thus, this researcher found the use of focus groups advantageous when gathering information about teachers' opinions and perceptions of bullying.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) tell us that, more recently, focus groups were used for marketing research, but are now widely accepted in applied research. Since focus groups allow participants to say anything they wish, they are considered naturalistic (Creswell, 2007; Krueger & Casey, 2000). The researcher was able to gain insight through nuances such as facial expressions and body language. Grudens-Schuck, Allen, and Larson (2004) believe that focus groups allow the researcher to listen not only for the actual words of informants, but to see "emotions, ironies, contradictions, and tensions" (p.2). Focus groups provide an excellent platform with which to investigate the natural lived experiences of teachers of young children in this study.

Focus groups allowed the researcher to take advantage of the interactions between interviewees which produced a more thorough, detailed look at the subject of bullying and participants' views of it. Creswell (2007) advocates the use of focus groups when participants might be hesitant to speak out. Marshall and Rossman (2006) recommend focus groups for a more natural setting where "socially oriented" subjects such as bullying may be easily discussed (p. 114). Given the sensitive nature of this inquiry, this researcher felt that focus groups would reveal the most information and allow a more flexible colloquium about bullying among participants.

*Observations*

Observations provide first-hand knowledge of participants and records "information as it occurs" (Creswell, 2008, p. 179). Creswell also purports that observations are "useful in exploring topics that may be uncomfortable for participants to discuss" (p. 179). Marshall and

Rossman (2006) believe that observations are often used in education when studying classrooms and observations "assume that behavior is purposeful and expressive of deeper values and beliefs" (p. 98). Results from these teacher observations gave insight into their beliefs about bullying behavior to inform this study. These same authors go on to say that observation is an important method in "all qualitative inquiry" and that it reveals "complex interactions in natural social settings" (p. 99). Observations were useful in this research to measure teachers' perceptions of occurrences of bullying behaviors in their young students on the playground.

*Interview*

This researcher conducted an informal interview (see Appendix F) with the counselor at the participating school. It was used as triangulation to increase reliability of this study. Creswell (2009) states that using additional data sources that confirm the study's findings will add to its validity. Marshall and Rossman (2006) feel a study that deals with personal lived experiences typically "relies on an in-depth interview strategy" (p.55).

*Participants and Setting*

This research was conducted at a middle-to-upper class church-affiliated preschool located in a metropolitan county of Atlanta, Georgia. The preschool serves students ages two to five years. The participants for this study were selected by convenience sample of teachers of children aged four and five. Creswell (2007) cites the main advantage of convenience sampling as availability, which in this study was paramount. All teachers of four and five year old children were invited to become a part this study. Each of the teachers invited to participate returned the signed consent form and joined the group. Each participant was free to drop out of the study at any time. The researcher made it clear that no negative consequences would result if a teacher decided to drop out of the study or declined to participate in the study.

All the teachers invited to participate had numerous years of teaching experience and most of them had been teaching at this preschool for several years. The teachers ranged in age from 30-65 years and represented four classrooms of students where there is one lead teacher and one teaching assistant. Those teachers invited to participate in this study represented one class of five-year olds and three classes of four-year olds. One class of four-year old children and one class of five-year-old children attended classes five days a week, while the other two classes of four-year olds attended classes four days a week. Each class had 16 students who were mostly Caucasian. There were 61 students who were observed by eight participating teachers, since three children were not allowed to participate.

Each researcher brings a set of individual notions and experiences into her research. This researcher believes that teachers are concerned about conflicts among their students, but may not recognize some of this repeated aggressive behavior as bullying. In reflecting upon time she spent in her own classroom, the researcher believes that bullying does occur among young students. Given the fact that this researcher has never been the victim of bullying, she may have a different perspective than another who may have experienced this aggression. Similarly, personal attitudes formed by life experiences may color the responses of teachers in this study and their strategies to cope with bullying in the classroom.

The researcher was alert when analyzing interactions and making connections from the focus group sessions to recognize that her view of the dialogue contains biases. She used member checking, where participants were encouraged to read the researcher's transcription of their focus group discussions, to verify that she stayed true to the intentions of the informants. Care was taken not to lead the participants and interject her thoughts into the discussions, but rather remain true to her role as facilitator.

Creswell (2007) believes that the researcher makes interpretations of what she finds and makes sense of what others have said. The researcher also used the interpretative paradigm as she reflected on how the research was conducted, analyzed, and advanced. The criteria for evaluating research findings, processing, and reporting was consistent with the descriptive interpretative analysis paradigm. The researcher reported first-hand her knowledge of interactions of the informants in their own environment as she was the facilitator. She remained neutral and refrained from prompting discussions or shifting the dialogue in any specific direction. The investigator was cautious to guard against any obvious reactions to the focus group interactions such as facial expressions or body language that might impede the open, risk-free atmosphere. Audio recordings were used to help ensure validity.

This author followed the advice of Creswell (2007) and Marshall and Rossman (2006) by ensuring a thorough, in-depth description of the setting, the group-sharing culture, and the limitations of the study. Issues that arose in the field that reflect on the relationship between the researcher and the informants were identified. The researcher recognized and reported biases and preconceived notions. She was open to new ideas that emerged and was careful to record data from the participants' point of view, as Creswell (2007) also instructs.

The researcher interviewed the licensed and certified counselor at the participating school with open-ended questions (see Appendix F). Creswell (2009) advocates interviews as useful to gain insight into views of the participants. The views of this counselor, who was a participant, were used to add credibility to this study.

*Data Instrumentation and Collection*

Three instruments were used for data collection: 1) focus groups, 2) observations, and 3) an interview. Participants were encouraged to read completed transcripts of the focus group

discussions and were made aware of the results of this study. The researcher created a timeline (See Appendix C) that was used to keep research proceeding in an appropriate manner. The researcher also kept in contact with the participating school's director and counselor by e-mail to ensure timely progress of the research and to address any concerns that arose during the research. The researcher was not present during any of the observations or classroom bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions. She did not have any contact whatsoever with the students.

*Focus Group One* (FG1)

This phenomenological study sought to ascertain how bibliotherapeutic intervention strategies may affect teachers' perceptions of bullying behaviors in their students. The initial focus group (FG1) consisted of eight classroom teachers of children aged four and five, selected by convenience sample. The director of the preschool also chose to come. The researcher served as facilitator only, using a list of guided questions she created (see Appendix A). The first focus group session took place prior to the planned bibliotherapeutic intervention classroom sessions and a second focus group session occurred after these strategies were completed. This focus group session was approximately one hour in length.

The researcher remained neutral and assumed the role of facilitator only during the focus group discussions. She did not participate in any way other than to keep the interactions focused on the topic or to discourage any single person from monopolizing the time. This author took notes during the focus group meetings and described any nuances that might not be apparent from the recorded audio tapes. She made any needed adjustments to the guided questions or added questions, if needed, to obtain complete information as to teachers' responses to bullying in their classrooms.

This researcher transcribed the audio tapes and analyzed them for categories, themes, sub-themes, and patterns. Themes and descriptions of the classroom culture as described by the participants were then coded as suggested by Creswell (2007). Memoing was used as the author read, analyzed the data, and made notes. Information that was unrelated to the themes was put into new categories or not used. New relationships emerged as all data was analyzed and organized. Data analysis was done simultaneously with data collection, and was done ethically and honestly.

*Pre-Intervention Observations*

After the initial focus group meeting, teachers recorded occurrences of bullying behaviors they witnessed in their students as they played on the playground during recess. Participants used a pre-intervention checklist of behaviors created by the researcher (see Appendix D). The checklist consisted of seven behaviors that occurred frequently in research when describing bullying behaviors (Olweus 2002). Three blank lines were left for teachers to add additional behaviors they observed that they felt were bullying behaviors. Participants observed their students' behavior every day for 30 minutes on the playground for two school weeks prior to any intervention strategies.

*Bibliotherapeutic Intervention Sessions*

The counselor presented three sessions of bibliotherapeutic bullying intervention strategies (see Appendix C) to students in the participating teachers' classrooms after conclusion of the first set of student observations. These approximately 30-minute sessions were presented once a week for three weeks and participating teachers remained in the classroom during these presentations. The participating school counselor conducted each of the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions alone and used the same script (that she created) in each class to increase

fidelity. These sessions were based on three books designed for young children that discussed bullying in a non-threatening way. The counselor conducted activities or games to reinforce the reading of the books with the children.

The books selected for the bibliotherapeutic bullying intervention sessions were: 1) *Howard B. Wigglebottom Learns About Bullies* by Howard Binkow, 2) *The Recess Queen* by Alexis O'Neill, and 3) *Lucy and the Bully* by Claire Alexander. All books were selected because of the subject matter, presentation of the subject matter, and the age-appropriateness of the text and illustrations. All three books were recommended for children aged four to eight or younger and were picture books with little text. The counselor at the participating school assisted in selecting these books and attested to the appropriateness of these texts and illustrations for preschool-aged children.

Each book used in the intervention sessions was chosen for a specific purpose. The individual texts spoke to specific topics that the researcher wanted to address with the students. *Howard B. Wigglebottom Learns About Bullies* was chosen to illustrate the definition of bullying and introduce vocabulary to the students. The second book, *The Recess Queen*, was chosen because it discussed acceptable and unacceptable behaviors on the playground which helped students to recognize bullying behaviors. The last book, *Lucy and the Bully*, was chosen because it provided students with ways to combat bullying behaviors and empower them to stand up to bullies.

Classroom activities were used to reinforce the literature during the intervention sessions. In session one, the counselor conducted a puppet show to reinforce the information presented in the book, *Howard B. Wigglebottom Learns About Bullies.* After reading *The Recess Queen*, in session two, a game was played where children had to identify behaviors read by the counselor

as acceptable or unacceptable behaviors. The last session included reading *Lucy and the Bully* and allowing the children to volunteer to use puppets to role play ways to combat bullying after the counselor presented scenarios.

*Post-Intervention Observations*

A second set of student observations occurred after the classroom bibliotherapeutic bullying intervention sessions. A post-intervention behavioral checklist (see Appendix E) was provided to participants that included any additional behaviors added by teachers during the first set of observations. The pre-intervention and post-intervention checklists were identical. The second set of teacher observations also occurred on the playground during recess for two school weeks for 30 minutes. A numerical tally of teachers' observations of occurrences of bullying behavior in their students was presented and discussed in order to demonstrate changes in their perceptions before and after bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions (See Table 1).

*Focus Group Two* (FG2)

A second focus group (FG2) was conducted the week after completion of the second set of teacher observations. The group was composed of the same eight participating teachers and the participating school's counselor who was not present during FG1. The school director was not present for the second focus group meeting as she was for FG1. The meeting was conducted much like the first focus group where the researcher served as facilitator only and she took notes during the discussion. She used an identical set of guiding questions (See Appendix B) as was used in the first focus group session and remained neutral throughout the dialogue. This group discussion was also approximately one hour in length.

Again, the researcher transcribed the audio recording of FG2 proceedings and analyzed them for categories, themes, sub-themes, and patterns. Memoing was once more used as the

author read the data. She compared both FG1 and FG2 for similarities and differences (See Table 2). Caution was taken to ensure anonymity of informants and the same numerals used in FG1 were assigned again to each participant for transcription and coding.

*Interview*

After the above data was collected, the researcher interviewed the participating counselor to ascertain her perceptions of how bibliotherapeutic intervention strategies affected teachers' perceptions of bullying behavior in their young children ages four and five. The researcher used open-ended questions (see Appendix F) to provide triangulation and increased validation for this study. The investigator took notes as the informant answered the questions and added secondary questions to the original questions in order to clarify her answers. Again, the audio recording of this interview was transcribed and the transcription was shared with the participating counselor to ensure the researcher rendered her intentions correctly. Care was taken by the researcher not to attempt to lead the participant in any specific direction during the interview.

*Analysis*

This researcher gathered "bits and pieces of evidence to formulate" a convincing and compelling picture of the whole (Creswell, 2007, p. 204). Data analysis involved identifying themes and generating codes that arose from transcriptions of participants' focus group discussions, observations, and the counselor's interview. The researcher did "take the text or qualitative information apart, and look for categories, themes, or dimensions of information" (Creswell, 2007, p. 153). She used the lens of Noddings' four tenets of care as she examined themes and patterns in informants' responses. She also examined themes that emerged from her research findings in the literature.

In addition to member checking, validation of this research was increased through peer debriefing and thick description of data. According to Schwandt (2007), peer debriefing involves the researcher sharing ideas about the procedures and checking the dependability of the study with a trusted and knowledgeable colleague.

The researcher interviewed the participating counselor with open-ended questions (see Appendix F) in order to triangulate data sources for this study. Often individuals are not available for interviews; thus, the researcher took advantage of this opportunity to ascertain data from a highly reliable source, a professional who was immersed in the experiences of the school during this study. Creswell (2007) says that interviews are good ways to supplement other data sources.

*Limitations*

It is hoped that this study will be valuable in adding to needed research in bullying behavior in young children. There are several limitations, however. Time is always a concern to researchers and this study was no exception. Results from a study conducted over a longer period of time might produce more valid conclusions.

Secondly, the participants in this study belonged to one private, upper to middle socioeconomic, homogenous group who had known each other for seven months or longer. Informants from this homogeneous population are likely not to be typical of this state or nation. Had this group been more diverse, or less acquainted with each other, more conflict may have arisen during teacher observations. Thus, the conclusions from this study may not be generalizable over an entire population of young children given its limited scope.

Biases always impact research. Teachers, students, and the researcher bring certain background experiences that influence their perceptions and feedback. These biases are often

hidden so that participants are unable to adjust for them. Scarpaci (2006) reminds teachers that they must be aware of their preconceived ideas about bullying in order to address this behavior. Opinions of participants may have been colored somewhat by the presence of their supervisor during the first focus group (FG1) and by the knowledge of prior interactions with this year's students. Interactions among students may change with the mix of student personalities and backgrounds each year, too.

Parents and the home environment influence how children see bullying and how they feel about the acceptability of teasing or playing. Coloroso (2008) states that parents who are too strict or too permissive may encourage bullying and may repress a child's healthy display of emotions. Coloroso also believes that children see their parents as role models and may imitate aggressive behaviors of their parents. This home influence may be different in any given student or student population.

This research examined only 13 aggressive behaviors listed by Olweus (n.d.) with eight teacher participants who observed 61 students. Bullying may involve many behaviors that were not addressed herein. Given an increased number of participants and children to observe, other behaviors may have come to light.

The sensitive nature of this topic may have caused some lack of enthusiasm for this research and hesitancy on the part of potential participants. Concern regarding the subject of this investigation prevented the researcher from having any interactions with the children in the participating school which could have been a limitation in this study.

*Summary*

Teachers are an integral part of change in schools (Cuban, 2007). The only way bullying will be lessened or prevented is through their diligence and commitment to this challenge.

Without teachers' dedication to stopping this injustice, no program or incentive will be effective (Newman et al, 2000). This study employed focus groups, observations, and an interview to investigate how bibliotherapeutic bullying intervention affects teachers' perceptions of bullying behavior in their students ages four and five. The research serves to inform this researcher, other administrators, teachers, parents, and the community about bullying and teachers' perceptions so that awareness may be raised. "Research now suggests that bullies, their victims, bystanders, parents, teachers, and other adults in the building are all part of an ecology in schools that can either sustain or suppress bullying behaviors" (Viadero, 2010, p. 1).

According to Kotter (1996), without a sense of urgency among stakeholders regarding bullying, little of consequence will be accomplished. Schools need to become aware of bullying and of the urgency in establishing prevention strategies for these behaviors. "Awareness is the first step in preventing bullying" (Scarpaci, 2006, p. 172). The researcher intends for this study to increase awareness in the entire school community regarding bullying among young children, to stimulate conversations about how to intervene for these young students after an increased awareness, and to add to the overall knowledge in this area of research. All the goals of this research will ultimately serve to assist our students in escaping harm through bullying and to create optimal opportunities for learning to occur in the school setting.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Data Analysis

### *Data Description*

This study intended to investigate the effect of bibliotherapeutic intervention on teachers' perceptions of bullying in young children aged four and five years old. Its purpose was achieved by examining teachers' perceptions of bullying before and after bibliotherapeutic bullying intervention sessions presented by the participating school's counselor in the participating teachers' classrooms. Focus groups, observations, and an interview were used to measure teachers' perceptions and guiding questions were created by the researcher to ensure discussions centered on the topic of interest.

#### *Focus Groups*

The pre-intervention strategy focus group (FG 1) consisted of eight teachers of four and five year olds at an upper to middle class church-affiliated preschool. These teacher participants represented a total of four classrooms of 16 children each, although three children were not allowed to be present for the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions due to lack of parental consent. These children were picked up from school early or went into the computer lab during the bibliotherapeutic sessions.

There were three classes of four year olds and one class of five year olds. Each of the four classes had one lead teacher and one teaching assistant. The preschool director also participated in FG1 and this researcher served as facilitator. Each teacher was given an identification number for use in the transcription of the focus group discussions for anonymity. Lead teachers of the four-year-old classes were assigned numbers 4a1 and 4b1 and 4c1. Teaching assistants for the four-year-old classes were assigned numbers 4a2, 4b2, and 4c2.

Teachers of the five-year-old students were designated as 5a1 and 5a2, for the lead teacher and teaching assistant, respectively.

Everyone sat in small student chairs around two of the student tables that were adjacent to each other in one of the participating teachers' classrooms. Each participant was free to sit where she wished, but teaching partners tended to sit next to each other. The room was set up almost in a circular configuration and the atmosphere was one of support and harmony. Very often when one teacher would speak, several teachers would interject agreement with words such as, "right," "yes," or "unhun."

The post-bibliotherapeutic intervention focus group (FG 2) consisted of the same eight teachers of students ages four and five, but the preschool director was not present for FG2 as she was in FG1. The school counselor was present for FG2, but not present for FG1. Participants in FG2 sat, as in the initial focus group, in small student chairs at two student tables that were pushed near each other in the same participating teacher's classroom as FG1. The atmosphere in the room was again cordial and supportive.

*Data Analysis*

*Teachers' Perceptions of Bullying*

During both FG1 and FG2, teachers admitted that when first contemplating study participation, they doubted that bullying existed in preschool. In FG1, the preschool director stated, "I'm like, bullying in the preschool? But you sit here and talk about it…there are definitely forms" of it. In FG2 one teacher stated that "we were kind of going (making a face with a knitted brow that indicated uncertainty), you know, and then when you are more educated…when you are educated about it you understand what happens and what's going on."

As time elapsed while consent forms were collected, teachers had the opportunity to think and talk about the possibility of bullying in their school. Thoughts turned to the topic of bullying as a natural occurrence given the time teachers were anticipating the study and collecting consent forms before data collection began. By the beginning of FG1, the majority of the teachers professed to believe that bullying does exist in preschool students and that it involves hurting another person's feelings. Definitions of bullying in FG1 included, "I guess any child making another child feel rotten" or "any child making another child feel bad in any way, you know,…not feel good about themselves." One teacher felt that bullying involved "one child picking on another," implying a more serious nature that might involve physical harm.

As the discussion progressed in FG1, the teachers began to describe bullying as "purposeful" behavior. They recalled episodes in which children willfully excluded someone from sitting with them or "enjoyed" getting another person in trouble by tattling unjustly. One teacher recounted a time when a student took a toy from one child and when that child grabbed the toy back, she tattled and said the child snatched the toy away from her, as though she had the toy initially. She would "purposely take something away from somebody…so when they take it back she gets mad and comes and tattles…a little bit of manipulation." This behavior was exhibited for a short while before either teacher in the classroom became aware of her attempt to get others "in trouble."

A second teacher concurred that bullying had a purpose and described how one child thought it was fun to knock over someone's block tower. She explained how children were cooperating well together until one particular boy tried to join in the play. "Kids are all playing nicely, everything is great. He arrives…everybody's crying." Yet, teachers discussed how it may be hard to determine if the behavior is purposeful or not. For example, some children crash into

the next person in line and the child who is hit will respond with a “punch” whether the first child bumped into that person accidentally or intentionally.

This group of all female teachers believed that girls could be “a little mean” when they get together. Boys tend to “get over things quickly,” they purported, but they felt that girls are “not as forgiving.” The teachers reported that boys will have a tiff then will quickly be playing together again. However, they went on to say that girls will do something “really mean” and then just smile at you as though they were innocent. They also believed that girls were more verbal and boys more physical with their bullying behaviors overall. Teacher 4a1 felt that girls use “fiery words,” whisper about others, are “sneaky,” and all the while they are smiling for their teachers. Boys, she thought, are more honest when questioned; girls initially try to deny the accusations. Teacher 5a1 agreed and said that girls are more likely to be sneaky and mean, and tend to be cliquish, too. Teachers believed that most bullying from boys and girls took place in areas that were less visible, such as the bus or secluded areas of the playground. Teacher 4a1 described how children “can scoot into the little tunnel [on the playground] without teachers looking or they can go on the bus where it is kind of, you know, hidden because there is so many kids on the bus.” Bullying happens, according to Teacher 4a1, where “there is not a lot of teacher presence.”

Teacher 5a1 reported on one of her classroom activities that may have encouraged bullying. She asked students to sign their names each morning as they came into the classroom as a record of their attendance. Teacher 5a1 was informed by parents that some children wanted to stay home from school because they did not want to sign in each morning. When some children had difficulty writing their name in the morning, other children said “mean things” to them because they were unable write their names properly. This teacher believed this behavior

may be bullying because the children were so upset that they told their parents they did not want to come back to school. “I think it is intimidation regardless of what age,” said one teacher of four year olds. The students used words to intimidate, such as “you’re not invited to my party” or “you’re not my friend” or “I don’t like your dress.” For “little kids our age [four and five], that’s a big deal,” she says. She went on to say that she thought “they do know who they can pick on and who they cannot pick on right away.” Another teacher agreed and said children tended to pick on peers who possessed less confidence. “They immediately know which kids they can get away with it…but if they are confident…where they say…I am going to have power over you, too, then…that can be very bad.” One teacher said, they “know exactly…the ones they can bully.” A teacher of four year olds acknowledged her belief that generally “there’s always the same one or two that are doing the bullying.” The lead teacher of the five year old class felt that “all kids might have a tendency to…either be a victim or a bully.” “…[T]here is always one child who has those tendencies.” But she did not know why or what caused these “tendencies” and cited perhaps “parenting skills” or “genes” might contribute to it.

The role of bystander was included briefly in this discourse when the conversation turned to confidence. Participants seemed to agree that when a bystander was more self-confident he or she might intervene in a bullying situation. One teacher referenced a strong, young female student whom she believed might have enough confidence to help the victim if witnessing a bullying situation.

Teacher 5a1 spoke about the difference in her class last year when many parents were divorced versus her class this year when most children had two-parent families. “[W]hen there’s conflict going on at home, you know, they have to act it out….somehow…the emotion has to

come out [in some way].” She was concerned that parents hesitated to discipline their children when they were divorced and were trying to compete for the child’s favor.

> “It was definitely an issue. One boy in particular…was spoiled a lot by both parents because he was, you know, with one during the week, one on the weekend, and they were both, you know, doing different things with him to try and make him happy all the time.”

She felt in families where both parents worked outside the home the children’s behavior was negatively impacted. She implied that discipline and attention may be lacking in these busy families who frequently employed nannies to care for their children. Nannies often “can’t control the kids” and, in one instance, the nanny did not speak English, she reported.

Teacher 4b1 stated that she “always thought the kids that went to daycare were the kids that you would see a lot of these behaviors from,” referring to bullying actions. Several agreed and felt that daycare workers are ill “equipped” and aren’t “paid enough to deal with the problems.” The participants described the daycare attitude as one of just “don’t let them kill each other” rather than having time and training to teach the children skills to deal with social challenges. Teacher 5a1 added that children of working parents may believe they need to behave in a way that warrants more attention from parents even if it means exhibiting poor behavior.

Teachers generally felt that siblings played important roles in the making of bullies and victims. One teacher cited her own personal experience where her older child bullied her younger one and may have modeled that behavior. “You have the older sibling to learn from, to watch, to watch their friends, to watch their television shows.” Teacher 4a1 stated that in light of sibling interactions, she felt that birth order might influence bullying somewhat, as well. She said, “because if you are the third child…you have the older siblings to learn from.”

During FG2, when again asked their definition of bullying, teachers were much more reluctant to speak about a specific definition. They began to give examples of what they believed

to be bullying behavior they had witnessed after the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions. One teacher reported that “we have broadened our definition of bullying” and several other teachers voiced agreement with her. She went further to state that there was a “spectrum” of bullying behaviors that “can fall under that umbrella.” One teacher indicated that her definition of bullying had been broadened by the checklist of bullying behaviors provided by the researcher. One behavior they did quote as bullying was “hurting someone with your words” (as opposed to physical harm and exclusion) and cited an instance where one girl tried to exclude one of two girls who wanted to play. The teacher was pleased that the girl reported that exclusion to her.

Teacher 5a1 recalled a meeting with a private-practice counselor, their in-house counselor, and a parent who discussed how bullying might be like a “tiger in a cage.” The private-practice counselor stated that when the tiger came out of the cage, it was very destructive, so the counselor was encouraging this child to be calm inside and not let the “tiger” out of its cage. The counselor at the participating school attempted to clarify the intent of this private-practice therapist by saying that if the child remained calm inside she would be able to make better choices. However, Teacher 4a1 felt the opposite and voiced the only disagreement during the FG2 session. She felt that bullies force the victim or “tiger” into the cage by preventing a child from making his or her own choices. The bully would intimidate and cause the “tiger” to shrink into its cage. Several teachers agreed with the second interpretation after it was verbalized.

A new term, “the friendly bully,” was invented by a teacher of the four-year-old class (Teacher 4a1). The “friendly bully” would not actually hurt anyone, but would tattle to retaliate for something he did not like and get others in trouble. She said two children could be “playing together and for some reason, it’s the same two kids and I always have the one kid that’s always

the tattler and the other kid could just be playing, no big deal, accidentally knocks over something." The tattler told the teacher that the child's behavior was intentional and upon investigation and "talking it out," the conclusion was reached that it was not purposeful. Thus, this teacher told the tattler that he is "being a bully" because he knows this child is not guilty as he originally reported. She felt that this child tried to control his peer.

When all the teachers in FG2 were questioned about tattling versus bullying, they indicated they are attempting to stop tattling. "There is definitely a difference in the aggressiveness and a difference in the manipulation part of the whole thing," according to Teacher 4a1. She continues to report that there is a "broad spectrum…different levels and different degrees" of how children respond to others. Another four-year old classroom teacher (4c1) reported that her children often like to get others in trouble by tattling. This teacher viewed tattling as bullying and recalled the story from FG1 about the little girl who would snatch a toy away from another child and when the child grabbed the toy back, the little girl would tattle on that child. So, this teacher reported that the child was "…tattling on the things she's started by doing it first." This little girl's teacher told of an improvement in this behavior since the counselor's bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions.

Teacher 4a1mentioned that teachers have been talking with their students about calling behavior purposeful when it was actually accidental behavior. She said they have been discussing how "…you might be the one getting in trouble if you keep tattling on things that were an accident…" The teachers saw this behavior as children receiving pleasure from getting other children in trouble or a power struggle for control of their peers.

In summary, teachers' definitions and perceptions of bullying became broader and more encompassing as exhibited by their comments in FG2. They cited more complex behaviors

involved in bullying rather than simply hurting someone's feelings, such as exclusion and parent/sibling influences from home. Participants began using words to refer to bullying such as "purposeful" behavior and "manipulation" in FG2.

*Emerging Themes from Data*

Data was color-coded and analyze for recurring themes. Several characteristics of bullying appeared in data from both FG1 and FG2. Teachers were in agreement that name-calling, physical size, intimidation, fear, and power were involved in bullying.

*Name-Calling*

One example of name-calling was given in the FG1and a second one was discussed in FG2. In FG1, teacher 5a1 recalled a time when the children called a little boy (Boy A) the "pizza monster" because he liked pizza so much. The students would call him the "pizza monster" and everyone would laugh, including the child who ate the pizza. Thinking this was a term of endearment, the teacher learned otherwise when the parent informed her that this child was very upset about the name-calling. The teacher felt bad because she "…didn't know until the parents came in that he was going home at night and he was very upset." The teachers thought "it was fun, I mean, no one was laughing *at* him…it was kind of like, you know, the cookie monster is a fun character and *he* is a fun character, sort of like the cookie monster, you know."

The name-calling discussed in FG2 was directed by peers at Boy A (called the pizza monster), who became very angry and struck back in revenge when it occurred. "And mom had told me that they call him names and he doesn't like it," according to Teacher 5a1. The teacher instructed Boy A to try to "turn the other way and ignore them…they'll get tired of calling you names 'cause they'll be like, this isn't any fun." She advised the boy that when he reacts angrily to the name-calling, the children "think you are not a very nice friend and they won't want to be

your friend…and you end up getting in trouble. I said if you can do that they'll stop." She then told Boy A that "if it gets too much for you to handle then you come to" your teachers.

Teachers felt that the more comfortable the children were with each other, the more they felt they could "gang up and pick on someone." They became more "comfortable with excluding or calling names or anything like that." Teacher 4a1 states that at the beginning of the year, the children feel more of an individual, but later in the year children have developed relationships and two will work together in calling another child names or excluding someone.

### *Intimidation*

#### *Intimidation by Size*

Intimidation was mentioned in both focus group sessions as being a part of bullying. "Bullying is intimidation regardless of [the] age" of the child, according to Teacher 4a1 in FG1. Teachers cited words, physical size, and age as attributes used to intimidate. "I mean they [the five year old students] are a lot bigger, taller, you know, and they can be intimidating to some of the little teeny ones…" The issue of physical size was raised several times during both focus group sessions. Teacher 5a1 spoke of the time her class of five year olds walked onto the playground while a younger class was already playing there. Some of the children in the younger class went running to their teachers saying, "we're scared and they're big" and they had not interacted with this older class. Some children even told their parents they did not like to be on the playground with that class, showing that size did intimidate them.

The second example involved two big boys hovering over smaller children in the classroom whispering into the ears of the smaller ones. Teachers became concerned with the intimidating body language of the children involved and intervened. Teacher 4a1 contacted the parents and "…after that it stopped immediately." One teacher confided that it was "just amazing

…that at four they had already figured out that because of their size they could intimidate without even using words."

Teachers also allege that size works the opposite way for victims of bullying. The victim is a "lot smaller, almost looks frail, very thin, uh, doesn't make good eye contact with people, um shy, you know, just, he is not…more introverted than not and he just overall, he just looks different."

### *Intimidation by Reputation*

Some participants mentioned reputation as a means to intimidate. The participants in FG2 were consumed with an incident that had happened in the five-year-old class recently and spoke several times about its impact during FG2. A big boy (Boy A, the same child as mentioned previously with name-calling) had been exhibiting aggressive behaviors with several children and was getting a poor reputation throughout the school. This young boy had a play date with another boy at his house. While at the house they played with a real gun and that experience was brought into the classroom through student conversations during school the next day. When the teacher ascertained that the child did actually have access to a real gun, she immediately contacted the mother. The mother did not seem to think this behavior was inappropriate and had allowed the child to wear a bullet necklace to school prior to this teacher-parent conference. The mother admitted that the child had taken a kitchen knife and tried to cut down a tree, on another occasion, but she was not worried. After meeting with the teacher, the parent did contact the mother of the child who had visited their home to explain that the two boys had played with the gun and there was a knife in the home, too. Boy A's father is a policeman. After the initial parent contact, this event caused much alarm in the school and one mother of a child in another classroom wrote a note to her child's teacher explaining that her child was afraid of this boy even

though they were in different classes. The note reported that her child did not want to go to school and was afraid to be on the playground at the same time with him. Other children appeared fearful of him, too, according to the group of participants, although those children had no contact with him. Boy A intimidated children in other classes because of his reputation as being aggressive on the playground. The counselor speculated that this reputation may be partially based on this child's demeanor, size, and age even before the weapons incident.

Days later, Boy A was involved in a second episode where he threatened a child on the playground. The child who was threatened came to the teacher for help. The teacher recalled, "that little boy was physically shaking! I mean he was terrified!" The frightened little boy detailed how Boy A had said he was going to kill him. The aggressive child (Boy A) denied it at first, but eventually admitted to saying he was "going to get" him. The parent of Boy A was called in again, even though it was near the end of the school year and this child was not returning to the participating school the next year due to his age. The teachers remained concerned about this child and hoped that next year the parents would give "the [new] school a heads-up" regarding his "personality."

This boy's teacher feels that Boy A (the child who played with the gun and knife and who was called names) is full of anger and becomes a bully partly because of the way he is treated at school. The children have called this boy "pizza monster" as discussed earlier and his parent has reported to the teacher that her son does not like the other children calling him names. "And mom had told me that they call him names…, and he doesn't like it, which they do."

However, the teachers in his class were surprised with Boy A's display of anger. His teachers described him as "a great kid," " very mannerly," and "sensitive" in the classroom.

> "…I see him as being a passive, nice little boy that plays and then all of a sudden someone starts calling him names, so his rage comes out at that and rather than keeping it, you know, just ignoring it, he gets mad…."

"…[T]hey know he's gonna have that reaction then get in trouble…," according to his teacher. The kids know if they call him names that will put him "over the edge." The lead teacher talked with Boy A, trying to give him confidence to keep the name-calling from upsetting him; however, she did not speak about reprimanding the name-callers or stopping them from doing this to him.

A third occurrence on the playground began with Boy A (the child who played with the gun and knife and who was called names) playing with two other children: one girl and another boy. The three of them were going to Boy A's home for a play date that afternoon after school. "So, sometimes this big boy can be quite physical, so he was grabbing the little girl by the arm to the point where he was probably getting a little too rough and her arm was turning red." This little girl explained to the teacher that she had asked Boy A to stop, but he would not. When the teacher investigated the incident, Boy A said he was just grabbing her, as though they were simply playing normally. The teacher advised that they should play another game and soon the little girl came back to the teacher crying. "She was crying hysterical, I mean just hysterical," said Teacher 5a2. Boy A had told the little girl that she got him in trouble and now she could not go to his house to play that day. "She was out of control. She just completely lost it," her teacher remembered.

While Teacher 5a2 calmed the little girl, she noticed Boy A at the swings with another little boy. She recalls, "I am watching them, and you know how boys can be a little physical, but I am watching and I'm like, this is not playing Star Wars, this is…they were beating each other up." Boy A had another little boy "pinned against the wall. He had him…you know, kind of got

his neck around, and he was pushing him and the other little boy was, you know, pushing him back." When questioned, Boy A told his teacher this little boy had gotten his brother in trouble, although the brother was not on the playground with them that day.

*Summary of Reputation*

It can be said that a child has a bad or poor reputation when a child does not have appropriate social skills. Boy A's parents did not seem to understand that their son's aggressive behavior on the playground and playing with a real gun and real bullets was not appropriate. Boy A's bullying behavior most likely will not change without someone providing him strategies to improve his social skills and setting boundaries for him. Malecki and Demaray (2004) inform us that the "level of [social] support that students receive from significant individuals in their environments may influence [the] bully" for the positive or the negative (p. 211).Without intervention for Boy A, he may continue to shock children with his actions as he tries to fit in socially. Nelsen, Erwin, and Duffy (2007) state that children get discouraged if they don't have a sense of belonging or acceptance and may misbehave. These authors go on to say that increased self-esteem is often a result of having appropriate social skills.

*Intimidation by Labeling*

Boy A's teacher became concerned that her student would be labeled and this label would go with him next year. "Because they have heard…what he did to someone else they are anxious and they feel like the victims, so they are like nervous about it." The mother shared her concern about labeling with the teacher. She is afraid he is "gonna get that label because he is a bigger boy." The counselor stated that children sometimes label other children and begin to expect certain types of behavior from that child. They may look for aggressive behavior even when he is playing nicely. Children may interpret an innocent gesture as one with hurtful intentions,

according to the school counselor. One teacher agreed that children "earn a reputation among their peers and then people start assuming things." Teacher 4c2 felt that this child would "have *so* been labeled already" if he had gone to his elementary school this year.

### *Intimidation by Fear*

Teachers in both focus groups sessions spoke of children being fearful. As previously discussed, several children were afraid of other children. The boy (Boy A) who was called the Pizza Monster was "…afraid to bring his lunch to school because everyone laughed at him." Several children were afraid of Boy A on the playground even though the children were not in the same class or physically around this child.

### *Power*

When questioned about whether bullying involved power, all teachers agreed that it does. The topic of power and how it related to bullying was discussed in both FG1 and FG2. In FG1 the idea of power was seen as how one dominates others.

> "I think sometimes they almost like have to…they are like dogs they have to figure out who's the dominant and then they have an incident and then everybody, you know, falls in line. They have to figure out where their power lies and …everybody knows all the boundaries everybody has…," according to teacher 4a1. "They are trying to figure out where they stand. They are trying to figure out where they fit into…they want to figure out how many friends they have and how much loyalty they have…" as described by another teacher.

Several teachers felt that after the children became comfortable with each other, students "start testing the boundaries and they test their powers…" and this testing happens most often near the end of the school year. The preschool director felt that "the fives have the power." The fives are the biggest and oldest students in the school. Teacher 4b1 says that her children are "starting to feel their power and push the limits a little bit" more now toward the end of school.

Popular children may have more power than those with fewer friends, according to participants in FG1.

> "We had a couple of boys who were the popular kids and all the boys wanted to be with the popular boys." [The popular boys] used their physical traits to bully, but everybody wanted to go to their house, or be with them, or play with them or be with them on the playground…and I think that's what helps give them the power to hover and bully and everything else because they knew they had people backing them up that would do what they wanted to do just so that they could be friends with them."

Teacher 4b1 verbalized her agreement and added that her son was in the class with those boys and "he loved those boys." She said her sons still talk about those popular boys even though they do not attend the same school any longer. Olweus (n.d.) noted that bullying involves an imbalance in power.

During FG2, teacher 4a1 announced, "it is all about power." She observed an instance on the playground where two little girls had attempted to make another little girl succumb to their wishes. The teacher was proud that the little girl had "put her foot down" and stood up for herself. This little girl reported to her teacher that children "can't make people do stuff." This same teacher felt that as children get older and are with the popular crowd they are less likely to stand up for themselves. Teacher 4b1 verbalized her concern that students "express their power" by excluding other children.

### *Parental Attitudes*

Another interesting topic of dialogue that occurred in both focus groups was the shock experienced by most of the participants at the hesitancy of parents to allow students to participate in this study. Several teachers reported that when informed of the pending study, some parents began to think the school was concerned about their individual child being a bully and thus were doing this study. One parent was fearful that her son would be singled out for a one-on-one

conference with the school counselor. The preschool director reported that three people called her saying something like, “They aren’t talking about my kid are they?” A couple of teachers had to talk individually with parents to reassure them before they would allow their child to participate in the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions. Three sets of parents refused to allow their children to participate, so parents picked up their children early or allowed their child to visit the computer lab during the intervention strategies presented by their counselor. The teachers agreed that one child in particular (who was not identified in the focus group) who was not allowed to be present for the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions would have been one student they felt would benefit most from them.

One teacher continued the dialogue about fearful parents during FG2. She said “one thing that totally shocked me was when the note sent home to parents to notify them that we were having [the counselor] come in…to have a discussion on bullying, we had a huge number [of parents] who objected.”

Teacher 5a1 did report that one parent became concerned about her son’s behavior at home when he had friends over. This mother came to the teacher to ask if her child exhibited “bad” behavior at school. Her immediate response was to say no, but “you know, I have watched and when you are not” looking, he can be “naughty.” This parent was applauded by her son’s teacher for recognizing the child’s unacceptable behavior before his teacher became aware of it.

*Summary*

The following themes emerged from the focus group data: 1) name-calling, 2) intimidation, 3) power, and 4) parental attitudes. Teachers spoke about their lack of recognizing name-calling as such when it surfaced in this study and their surprise at the fear and apprehension this study generated in their parent population. The preschool director, counselor,

and more than one teacher had multiple conversations with parents before they were convinced that this study was a pro-active initiative that would benefit the children. There was almost an attitude of "if we do not know about bullying then it really will not exist." The counselor illustrated this attitude when she spoke of how one mother felt talking about bullying would "burst the bubble" of her child thinking bullying did not happen.

Intimidation was a major topic of discussion in the focus groups. Participants cited physical size and age as two key means of intimidation by their students. These same teachers gave an account of how reputation, labeling and fear may cause unintentional intimidation in some instances.

The theme of power was mentioned in the focus groups and in Olweus' (n.d.) definition of bullying. Both participants and Olweus (n.d.) described bullying as including an imbalance in power. Teacher 4a1 said, "It's all about power." Several examples were given by the teachers and the preschool director of how power was used in their school to control others. Additional themes were introduced through the literature review.

*Themes from the Literature Review*

In addition to the above themes that emerged from the data, the topics of media influence, personalities, and empowerment arose from the literature review. In analyzing the focus group data, these themes appeared only in the post-intervention focus group sessions (FG2).

*Media Influence*

The media influence on young children can be detrimental if children are exposed to violence. Gruenert (as cited in Piotrowski & Hoot, 2008) believes that children may see violence on television and in video games and consequently feel it is acceptable behavior. Teachers in FG2 referred to how older siblings play violent video games and watch violent television

programs with younger siblings around them. Teacher 4a1 stated that children "listen closer" to television programs and "feed on all the wrong information." She suggests that parents and teachers "fill children's cups" with good information rather than allowing the media to influence them.

*Personalities*

Several teachers referred to children's personalities and how personality influenced their actions. Olweus (n.d.) also believes that bullying can be caused by some aggressive personality types. Teachers expressed concern about how educators at Boy A's new school would handle his aggressive, explosive personality. Teacher 4b2 recalled a personal experience with her own son and was afraid that his personality was altered by playing a video game with his older brother. "My youngest was watching them play X-Files and he probably shouldn't have. You know, so I had to really pay attention to his personality." Teachers seemed to believe that certain personalities lend themselves to aggressive behaviors that could be considered to be bullying.

*Empowerment*

Addressing bullying at an early age appeared to be of value to these teachers in setting a foundation for children's behavior in future years.

> "If you learn the skills at four and five, it becomes habit when they go off to elementary school and there's not an issue. If they don't ever learn it and are just allowed to do it, then the habit is bullying. That is the habit that they learn…"

Teacher 4a1 believes that "…it is our job, especially at this age that we have to teach them the way to handle [bullying]." We, as educators, need to empower our students to be able to take care of themselves and their friends with the proper responses to bullying. "This is the foundation that they need moving forward. That's what's coming at ya." Teacher participants felt that preschools need to prepare their students for what is to come in elementary school. They

realize their students are going to face a “big wide world” when they leave the preschool and will not be with the “same kids that were at…the sweet, little preschool.” There will be children with much different backgrounds coming in and they need to “be on the ready.”

Another teacher felt preschool was the time for the children to test their skills in coping with bullying. “I felt after the lesson [intervention sessions], [the children] tried to test it, to try it out, you know, to see if, you know, if it would work.” This testing of their skills would help prepare the children to be empowered when confronted with a difficult bullying situation later in a perhaps less familiar and comfortable setting.

In FG2, the counselor agreed with the teachers by saying that “when somebody tells me they’re gonna get me,” children should know their options. “Should I say nothing, should I go hide, should I tell somebody, you know, that kind of stuff.” She believes it is the educator’s job to assist children with skills to help with “differentiation between when you are angry and you say, “I’m gonna get you”…or whatever.” Children need help in ways to calm down enough to make good choices, according to this counselor. She also purports that bystanders need to develop skills that enable them to make wise choices as well because they become “anxious and nervous and scared,” too.

*Dialogue*

The counselor in FG2 advocated an abundance of developmentally appropriate dialogue between teachers, counselors, principals, and their students. Dialogue is one of the four tenets of Nel Noddings’ Ethic of Care that was examined.

Teachers in FG1 cited several conversations with their students. Most often the dialogue was designed to assist a student with social skills. “It’s, you know, teachers [who] have to be the ones to say, this [behavior] is not okay.” Through discourse teachers can “teach” the children

"what they need to say back to the kids" who are bullying them. According to Noddings (1992), by establishing a relationship through dialogue with their students, teachers demonstrate their care for them.

Teachers acknowledged that they had their students for a major portion of their day and, therefore, should be talking with them on various subjects. One teacher told a story of how a little girl made faces when she wasn't happy. "If she didn't want to be next to someone, she would just give them this nasty face and I don't think she really realized just how unattractive it was until I put her in front of the mirror" and asked her to make the same face. So "…I think the facial expressions have gotten better."

Teacher 4c1 interjected a valid point when she reminded us that "…a long time ago it was part of our society that boys weren't supposed to show their feelings." Thus, teachers may need to initiate conversations with their boys. Teacher 5a2 added that educators need to train students that if something is bothering them, they can "go to a teacher, go home and talk to mommy or daddy, you know, talk about it" when unable to handle situations on their own.

Several teachers stated that at the "beginning of the year, we'll set our classroom rules and we discuss them and why we do have them." They felt dialogue important between the teacher and her students when forming classroom rules. Teacher 5a1 states, "you know, don't just tell them there's a rule. Ask…,you know, we talk about why we have rules, why we have some rules in the classroom, why we have rules on the playground."

Several teachers spoke of times they helped children talk through a difficult situation and think about good choices. They often talked about the child's feelings and how to help them express those feelings appropriately. While the teachers admitted that time was an issue, they also agreed that preschool teachers should work to find time to talk with their students so they

are better prepared to enter elementary school, when teachers' time constraints are likely worse, according to teacher 4a1.

One type of dialogue that might be sanctioned by Noddings is a rule about when it is safe to tattle. "My policy is that if it's gonna hurt you, me, or someone else then you should tattle," according to teacher 4c1. The discussion then turned to how dialogue might have helped Boy A understand the dangers of playing with guns, bullets, and knives. Most teachers felt that Boy A's mother and father should have talked with him early on about appropriate behaviors with dangerous tools. "I'm not sure really the home dynamics, but I think he just needs to talk more with her [the mother], you know, and both of them." These educators described how children have a natural curiosity and without dialogue children will not be aware of what is and is not acceptable use of these tools. Teacher 4a1 felt that if a child has "that interest right now, you need to talk about it."

Reference was made to parents who refused to discuss bullying with their child and the possible consequences when the child is faced with a bully or becomes a bully, such as was suspected of one child who did not participate in the study. The counselor found one parent's refusal difficult to understand. This mother's reasoning for not allowing her child to participate was fear of talking about bullying.

> "I mean the whole idea about parents that didn't want us talking about bullying because they are afraid it's going to burst the bubble, which was basically the quote from one of the mothers, is the idea that, well, the whole point is to do things in a developmentally appropriate way and to constantly be having conversations in that regard."

It was the unanimous opinion of participants that parents need to be included in dialogue regarding bullying. Teacher 4c1 spoke about how the entire study had been educational for the teachers, but how much the parents really needed to be educated about bullying, too. She recalled

a time when she organized a speaker for a parent educational program and felt "I don't really need to listen to that…but I was there" and the speaker drew her in right away.

> "I sat down and I thought, Oh my…I *so* needed to listen to that. And education is everything…I learned so much just like the parents in the preschool need to learn that this [bullying] does start this young and education is where it begins."

This researcher purports that much dialogue and discussion may need to take place in order to establish a relationship with students early in the year. Teachers recognize the need for dialogue with victims about their responses to bullying behaviors, too. One teacher voiced her concern, "We have to teach them how to talk back to the bullies at this age and not be a victim." At the beginning of school, if teachers spend time talking with and listening to individual students they may be able to create a more caring environment, such as is described by Siris and Osterman (2004) and Inlay, (2003) when they state that listening and spending time with one's students helps to create a more cooperative and cohesive classroom. Teachers 4a1 and 4a2 discussed that children want to talk to their teachers, but lack confidence. Teacher 4a2 said that children "are telling us something wrong has happened, they are just not confident about it," implying that we need to listen more to our students rather than just dismissing their attempts to talk to us as trivial.

*Modeling*

The topic of modeling appeared briefly in the FG1. Teachers used books to converse about appropriate behaviors when responding to being picked on by another. Teacher 5a1 read a story to her class about "Lucy Lamb [as a model] and how…she would pick on people and then" when it happened to her, she didn't like it.

Most of the teachers indicated that they modeled fair and ethical behaviors, although they did not openly verbalize it. They believed the students knew that their teachers were their friends

and would come to their rescue when needed. Teacher 5a1 reported that a child was aware that his teachers "wouldn't allow" certain behaviors and that all the children have "got to be friends." Another teacher felt that bullying could be decreased by the modeling and teaching of appropriate interpersonal behavioral skills. The majority of these teachers modeled the caring and trust that Noddings (1992) and Espelage and Swearer (2004) purport will reduce intimidation and victimization in classrooms.

*Practice*

The third tenet of Noddings' Ethic of Care is practice. Students may be prepared to assist others in bullying situations by practicing caring for each other in the classroom before an aggressive act occurs. Practice was discussed only once and that was in FG2. One teacher indicated that she talked about particular situations and "how to handle them…" in the classroom.

Also, in FG2, a couple of teachers revealed ways they practiced caring in the classroom, although they did not label the activities as such. One teacher did not allow discussions about birthday parties because "it just gets ugly…" but she admitted children may talk about birthday parties when she did not hear them. So, since discussions about birthday parties are banned altogether in that classroom, the children help the teacher monitor the rule and will not allow a child to talk about another regarding birthday parties. They help monitor each other's discussions so that peers will not be hurt.

A second teacher employs trustworthy children to help other students remember the rules that demonstrate caring in their room, such as no saving of seats. "Oh no, we aren't saving that seat…" the child reminded and the teacher reiterated the rule by telling the students that everyone in the class is friends with everyone and anybody can sit wherever they want.

Confident students can be “a good force in no bullying happening because they are gonna make sure it doesn’t.” Doll and Cummings (2008) advocate many opportunities for students to practice tolerance in the classroom which in turn enhances social skills and may reduce bullying. When the majority of students are involved in this caring behavior perhaps bullying will be less likely to occur.

### *Confirmation*

The last tenet of Noddings’ Ethic of Care is confirmation. Noddings (2005a) says that confirmation involves students discovering good attributes of their classmates, thereby creating a more nurturing classroom atmosphere. There were two examples of confirmation given by the participants. Both examples came from FG1. Teacher 5a1 reported that she rewards students’ behavior when they demonstrate caring or sympathy towards another child. “…[W]e have a star system…and…if you see a child, help a child…if we fall down, we help them up,…and we give stars for that. And we’ll talk about it, “Oh, you know, she was very nice and helped a friend. You know it isn’t just for work” that you get rewarded.

Teacher 4a1 believed that it was good for her students to see the positive attributes of their classmates. She gave every student in her class ten pieces of construction paper cut in the shape of a heart and they had to perform random acts of kindness “beyond what they normally do for chores” and record those behaviors on the heart-shaped paper. When the children brought the hearts back to school, they shared their random acts of kindness with the class and the students were able to hear about the good deeds of their classmates. This creates an atmosphere that will help nurture caring peer relationships. As Thornton (2001) states, appreciating each other’s capacities will develop more caring attitudes that discourage bullying.

*Parent Education*

Several participants spoke of the lack of education among parents overall. In FG1, teachers cited the misconceptions parents had when they were informed about this study. This concern came up in FG2 at the very beginning of the session. "…I think that in the people that rejected the idea of the [bullying prevention] class, there is a large percentage of parents that don't believe it [bullying ] occurs." Several teachers voiced agreement when the teacher verbalized her view. Teacher 4a1 felt that one parent in her class refused to allow her child to participate because she "doesn't follow and read through everything. She didn't really educate herself on what was there, so I thought that was kind of interesting and he was one of the kids I'd like to really be in there working it out." Teacher 4c1 felt that one little girl in her class who was behaving poorly would benefit most from help at home. "…[H]er mom is the one I think that really needs help and support and education on how to handle her at home."

The counselor, speaking in FG2, interjected her concern for parent education, too. She felt that behavior allowed by Boy A's parents (from the prior discussion regarding the gun and knife) stemmed from their lack of education, although this boy's mother is a counselor by profession.

> "I have talked" about bullying intervention sessions with the investigator of this study "where what we are doing here is the base…the stuff that kids are going to build on in the future. And like, like [someone said earlier] when they get to elementary school they're either going to say, yes, I'm going to continue to use that skill cause I never got a strategy to use a different skill. Or hey, somebody taught me something to do as an alternative to that. And that's what I think this whole process is…and this whole thing is…is more about here's your alternative, you know, and, and, in a developmentally appropriate alternative."

Teachers agreed with her that students need these strategies and parents need to understand this process.

Along with a lack of education about bullying, teachers felt parents lacked parenting skills and cited several instances that occurred recently to support that view. In FG2 Teacher 5a1 shared how one mother sought the counselor's help to get her twin girls to clean their room. She could not get them "to tidy up, I mean, without them biting each other." During the day the girls were not a problem in the classroom, she noted, but at home "they were out there like biting lumps out of each other."

Teacher 5a1 acquainted the group with a story about a child (Boy B) whom she felt was bullying his mother. During a family picnic at the school, one little boy tasted a drink the mother had brought him and after one sip said, "This tastes awful, here take this." Then he threw the drink at her and told her he was not going to drink it because it tasted "like yuk." The mother immediately apologized to the child and tasted the drink and said "I think it tastes okay." Teacher 4b1 countered with a story where one mother did take her child home from that same picnic because in her words, he was "being a bit of a brat." Most teachers were surprised, but very pleased and responded with comments like, "good for her." Teachers agreed that Boy B was very disrespectful towards his mother and that his mother did not know how to handle her child.

In FG1Teacher 5a1 shared a similar story.

> "We have a child that is very meek and mild in the classroom and actually could be perceived to be bullying on his mother. The mum comes in and the child will hit his mother and I mean speak abusively to his mother and the mother will not stop him or see or correct him... the behavior at home is unbelievable."

Most teachers agreed with Teacher 5a1 when she said,

> "there is none of this… not acceptable,… you know, what are the consequences, do you follow through or do you cave because they want peace at home and they can't take it, you know, the child was turning around and telling mom at home, I hate you, I wish you weren't my mother, I wish you were dead, I wish I was dead.

There was concern on the part of this teacher that if the child is allowed to act this way at home that this behavior may "carry on to doing it to his friends or to a girlfriend at sixteen." Another teacher agreed and said that the children will "think this is acceptable behavior." Teacher 4b1 felt that some parents have an unrealistic view of their child's behavior. She shared the following opinion:

> "A lot of parents think that kids this age, they are not going to do anything with the knife…but they are not old enough to make the decision, so what seems harmless…that he has a knife that has a toothpick and a little pair of scissors, and you know, I mean that would be a big flipping deal in elementary school if it shows up."

Some teachers spoke of frustration when parents allow inappropriate behaviors at home and suggested education might help here, too. "It's not him…it's not him," said one participant, implying that it was not Boy A's fault that he played with dangerous tools because he would not know they weren't safe without parental guidance. Teacher 5a1 said that some behavior is "just not appropriate, you know, so maybe, maybe a, maybe a lesson for the parents at the beginning of the year." Teacher 5a2 reiterated , in FG2, the need for parent education by suggesting that they have "a thing next year for parents and have like a little seminar, a little informative, you know, what this [bullying intervention sessions] is about and read some of your stories so they understand what we are talking about."

Teacher 4a1 responded with a story about strict parents. She felt that when parents were "really strict and they can't do anything or whatever, then they may take out all their aggressions

from home at school." Then she felt parents would not "see" this behavior or be aware that it takes place.

During FG1, one teacher observed that "some mothers, they baby their children and one year we had one child that as a five year old would come to school with smock…a boy…would come with smocked clothes on…and…if they go to school and they are still dressing like that…they're gonna get picked on."

In FG1 Teacher 5a1 also reported an incident that happened about a month before this study. A father confessed that "…during his whole life he was bullied through school…" and the teacher voiced her opinion that she could "…see that he would be a person that would have been bullied, particularly in high school" but did not state why she felt this way. The son of this man reported to his father that he was being bullied at school. The father subsequently wrote a note to the school saying his child was being bullied. "I know my child is being bullied in the classroom and on the playground," he wrote. The teacher met with the father and explained that the child wanted his "model," a creation he made at school with blocks, to be left intact each day rather than torn apart and put away to use the next day. The father did understand, after talking with the teacher, but the teacher felt the father was hyper-sensitive to the treatment of his child due to his own personal experience with bullying as a child. The preschool director interjected her opinion that a "five year old would not know what" the word, bullying, means without some sort of background knowledge or influence from home.

It appears from both focus group sessions that this school is prompt about involving parents and keeping them informed of concerns from school. When discussing the several major occurrences of aggressive behaviors, the teachers reported contacting parents several times in an effort to work closely with them to solve the children's problems. During the episode of violent

behavior from Boy A the teacher contacted the mother "many times" and tried to assist the mother with strategies for home. Teacher 5a1 reports sending notes home on several occasions, even when she does not always hear back promptly from parents.

*Summary*

Participants were all in agreement that schools and teachers need to do more to prevent bullying. They suggested that given the age of preschoolers, the teachers should deal with their individual classes and allow the counselor to play an important role by delivering programs such as the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions presented in this study.

> "…[Y]ou know, coming in and doing counseling sessions on it [bullying] you know, they get it. They understand it…so, I think the counseling in the classrooms is huge and it's also the teachers watching and making sure that, you know, that it's not happening. In schools I think teachers are gonna be your main source."

However, the director of the preschool quickly added, "It can't always be the teacher that does it, right?" While all teachers agreed with her remark, the conversation turned immediately back to how teachers could help victims by providing skills to enable children to stand up for themselves. Research does point to the fact that bullying cannot be significantly decreased without the entire community of stakeholders working together. For example, Espelage and Swearer (2003) report that no successful change in the school environment can take place without a commitment from all stakeholders.

*Observations*

Participants were asked to observe their students on the playground before and after bibliotherapeutic intervention strategy sessions. Both the lead teacher and teaching assistant observed their students for 30 minutes each day for two school weeks on the playground and tallied observed behaviors listed on a pre-strategy checklist designed by the researcher (see

Appendix D). The researcher created the behavioral checklist based on behaviors cited by Olweus (n.d.), Beane (2008), and Coloroso (2008) as bullying behaviors. Participants were allowed to add as many as three new behaviors to the checklist during the two-week pre-strategy observations if they felt it was bullying behavior.

*Pre-Intervention Strategy Observations*

The first two-week observation period took place between FG1 and the intervention strategies. During this initial observation, participants recorded 93 occurrences of bullying behaviors for the 13 behaviors (seven behaviors identified by the researcher (see Appendix D and six behaviors added by participants) on the checklist. The three highest number of observed behaviors overall were 19 instances of refusing to allow someone to play; 18 instances of pushing someone; and 15 observations of hitting (See Table 1).

Teachers 4a1 and 4a2 added "cutting in line" during the first week of observations and recorded a total of three instances of this behavior. These same teachers added two new behaviors during their second week of observations. Those behaviors were: 1)"Taking things from others" and 2) "Yelling." Teachers 4b1, 4b2, and 5a2 did not add new behaviors to their initial checklist. Teacher 4c1 added the following behaviors during the first week of observations: 1) "sitting on a sand toy to keep someone from playing" (hiding toys), 2) "kicking," and 3) "throwing wood chips at friends." Teacher 4c2 added "kicking" on day one of the first week and "throwing wood chips at another child" on day four of the first week. Teacher 4c2 did not add new behaviors on the second week, but Teacher 4c1 added "kicking" on the third day of the second week of observations. Teacher 5a1 added only "kicking (in play)" on the first day of the first week of observations and recorded one instance of kicking. Teacher 5a2 did not add any new behaviors to her checklist.

Teacher 5a1 recorded notes on several days during her observations. On the third day of the first week of pre-strategy observations, she noted that due to a busy schedule and poor weather conditions the class did not go onto the playground, but all were well behaved in the classroom. On the last day of the first week, she did not observe any of the behaviors listed on the checklist, but noted observing three girls "in a huddle and wondered if everything was ok." When she approached the girls to check on them, they reported that they were "talking it out together." Again on day one of the second week of observations this same teacher wrote at the bottom of the checklist that they were unable to go outside due to rain. Inside play was observed and she noted one instance of someone refusing to allow another to play. Lastly, she noted on the third day of the second week that there were "no incidents on the playground."

Teacher 5a1 wrote several notes to expound on her tallied observations. She wrote, "This child is well behaved in the classroom." This same teacher recorded that one child threatened another child by saying, "I'm going to get you" and his victim was "terrified." Teacher 5a2 also made notes on day three of the second set of observations. She wrote about one child "tackling, pushing, hitting" one child because the boy felt his victim had gotten "his brother and him in trouble." (Later in FG2, we found out that this was Boy A.) The same child threatened the same little boy saying, "You got me in trouble. You can't come to my [house] to play." His teacher explained this altercation in more detail during FG2. Teacher 4a1 had three tally marks under "cutting in line," but also wrote that those behaviors were "not always intentional." These written comments enabled the researcher to acquire a clearer picture of events during the week.

*Post-Intervention Strategy Observations*

Post-intervention strategy observations took place after the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions and before FG2. Data analysis of these observations revealed a total of 60 tallied

occurrences of bullying behaviors on the checklists as opposed to 93 in the pre-intervention strategy observations (See Table 1). Participants were asked to observe their students on the playground for two additional weeks for 30 minutes daily after the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions. The second checklist was identical to the first one used in the pre-intervention strategy observations. Cutting in line and throwing wood chips were the only teacher-added behaviors that were actually observed again during this second set of observations. Yelling, taking things from others, hiding toys from others, and kicking were not observed from any of the participants during the post-strategy observations.

Tallies from the post-intervention strategy checklists indicated the highest number of observed behaviors was 19 instances of children “refusing to allow another child to play.” The next highest number of occurrences was eight instances of “refusing to share.” Other totals were close in number, ranging from zero to eight. Four behaviors increased during the second observations. Those behaviors were: 1)“refusing to allow someone to play,” which was up by ten occurrences; 2) “refusing to share or take turns,” which was up by three occurrences; 3) “throwing wood chips,” which was up by three occurrences; and 4) “threatening,” which was up by one. Of the seven original behaviors on the checklists, four behaviors decreased and three increased (“refusing to allow someone to play,” “threatening” and “refusing to share or take turns”).The most radical change in the original checklist behaviors was in the number of occurrences of hitting that went from fifteen in the first observation to one in the second set of observations. This represents a decrease of over 90% (see Table 2).

Table 1. Teachers' Perceptions of Occurrences of Bullying Behavior on the Playground

| Teacher | Hitting 1 | Hitting 2 | Pushing 1 | Pushing 2 | Name Calling 1 | Name Calling 2 | Refusing Someone to Play 1 | Refusing Someone to Play 2 | Threatening 1 | Threatening 2 | Refusing to Share 1 | Refusing to Share 2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4a1 & 4a2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| 4b1 | 5 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 4b2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 4c1 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| 4c2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| 5a1 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 5a2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 15 | 1 | 18 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 19 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 8 |

| Teacher | Repeatedly Can't Get Along with Others 1 | Repeatedly Can't Get Along with Others 2 | *Cutting (Butting) in Line 1* | *Cutting (Butting) in Line 2* | *Throwing Wood Chips 1* | *Throwing Wood Chips 2* | *Yelling 1* | *Yelling 2* | *Kicking 1* | *Kicking 2* | *Taking Toys 1* | *Taking Toys 2* | *Hiding Toys 1* | *Hiding Toys 2* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4a1 & 4a2 | 0 | 3 | 7 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4b1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4b2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4c1 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 4c2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 5a1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 5a2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 11 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |

Table 1 shows numerical data representing teachers' perceptions of occurrences of bullying behavior exhibited on the playground before and after bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions. Two teachers, 4a1 and 4a2, combined their data into one checklist rather than reporting individually. The number 1 on the behavior titles indicates data collected before bibliotherapeutic intervention strategy sessions and the number 2 represents data collected after the bibliotherapeutic intervention strategy sessions. The teachers added the last six behaviors that are noted by italics and underlining. All other behaviors were listed on the original checklist provided to teachers by the researcher (see Appendices D and E). More information would be needed about the circumstances of the behaviors to determine if teacher's suggestions of

additional bullying behaviors on the checklist fit the definition of bullying behavior provided by Olweus (n.d.).

Table 2 shows the percentages of increases or decreases in observations of behaviors before and after bibliotherapeutic intervention strategy sessions.

Table 2. Percentages of Increases and Decreases in Teachers' Perceptions of Occurrences of Bullying Behavior Before and After Bibliotherapeutic Intervention.

| Behavior | Numerical Difference and Percentage of Increase from Pre-Intervention Strategy Sessions to Post-Intervention Strategy Sessions | Numerical Difference and Percentage of Decrease from Pre-Intervention Strategy Sessions to Post-Intervention Strategy Sessions |
|---|---|---|
| Hitting | | Decreased by 14 (93%) |
| Pushing | | Decreased by 14 (78%) |
| Name Calling | | Decreased by 1 (25%) |
| Refusing to Allow Someone to Play | Increased by 10 (111%) | |
| Threatening | Increased by 1 (25%) | |
| Refusing to Share | Increased by 3 (60%) | |
| Repeatedly Cannot Get Along with Others | | Decreased by 5 (45%) |
| *Cutting in Line* | | Decreased by 4 (57%) |
| *Throwing Wood Chips* | Increased by 3 (150%) | |
| *Yelling* | | Decreased by 1 (100%) |
| *Kicking* | | Decreased by 4 (100%) |
| *Taking Toys* | | Decreased by 1 (100%) |
| *Hiding Toys* | | Decreased by 1 (100%) |

items italicized and underlined were added by participants

During FG1, before the bibliotherapeutic sessions, participants did not report any instances of bullying on the playground. Teacher 5a1 alluded to the fact that some children were afraid of one of the big boys when on the playground, but no specific dispute was mentioned.

However, several teachers explained behaviors they observed on the playground during the FG2 discussion. Teacher 5a1 discussed the instance of threatening she observed on the 9th day of the post-intervention observations. She spoke of the child's fear discussed earlier, "…that little boy was physically shaking! I mean, you could see that he was terrified." Four other examples included:1)Teacher 4a1 reported that one girl refused to let two other girls play; 2)

Teacher 5a1 recalled an instance where several children became afraid of a big boy on the playground and one had her mother write a letter to the school; 3) Teacher 5a2 reported a boy getting physical with another child and verbally harassing her when she involved the teacher in their dispute; 4) Again, Teacher 5a2 recounted a story of how the child in episode three above had a physical fight with another child on the playground.

*Interview*

The researcher interviewed the counselor of the participating school who presented the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions. Her insight will serve to validate and triangulate this research. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic of bullying, the investigator in this study found educators reluctant to participate or entertain the idea of becoming a part of this study. She was allowed access to the participating school solely on the reputation of the participating counselor who knew the researcher. Otherwise, as stated by the director of this preschool, the researcher would not have been welcome at the participating school. Others involved in this study, such as some parents at the participating school and some university professors were hesitant about embarking on this study. Three parents refused to allow their children to be present when the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions were presented although those sessions were conducted by their own school's counselor, whom they knew. The researcher was allowed full access to all teacher participants, the director of the preschool and the counselor; however, she was not allowed to have contact of any kind with the students due to the sensitive nature of this inquiry. Therefore, feedback from this counselor was critical as she was the eyes and ears of the researcher for the day-to-day activities at the school, specifically the playground observations and bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions.

After being asked during an informal interview if she felt the teachers' perceptions of bullying had changed as a result of this study, the counselor replied with a firm "yes." She supported the researcher's opinion that the teachers had thought very little, if any, about bullying in preschool before contemplating this study. The counselor explained, "…when we started the whole discussion about it, and we told them what it was that we were gonna be doing…they were complying because…they just are willing to do anything that…that I think is valuable." She went on to say that the teacher participants were "compliant because I said this will be valuable…and in the end it will be good for you."

This counselor validated the researcher's premise that these teachers had little awareness of bullying when she shared the teachers' reactions to the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions that she witnessed.

> "…as the experience took place, and as the [bibliotherapeutic intervention] lessons happened and they actually sat through listening to those lessons and saw the response the children were having…I think they were like, wow, this is stuff that is happening on a regular basis and this is in fact something that we deal with that we never defined in this way."

She expressed her opinion that the experience of the study "was very eye-opening for" the teachers as they were "able to say, yes…this does happen." She elaborated further saying, "I do think that [the study] was one of those things where once they got into it and they saw what was happening and they saw the children's response to it then it changed their perception about what was and wasn't happening."

When questioned about her opinion of the teachers' observations of their students on the playground, the counselor affirmed that an increase in occurrences of "refusing to allow someone to play" likely came from an awareness of this behavior by both students and teachers from discussions in the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions. She felt that "…in the preschool mind

if you highlight something they're gonna be thinking about it in the forefront of their minds for a little while." Thus it might be more likely for a child to report a behavior to their teacher if they have just talked about that behavior in the classroom. The counselor shared her thinking that "…there was an increase in reports of issues because we got through talking about how you're not supposed to do that." She reminded us that this behavior is typical for preschool children when she said, "…preschoolers are pretty rule bound…that's just where they are developmentally."

Given her explanation of the above behavior, the researcher questioned the counselor as to the dramatic drop in occurrences of hitting behavior. Her response indicated her belief that teachers were likely to be more vigilant in monitoring these behaviors and less likely to ignore them after their exposure to the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions. Thus, the children would tend not to exhibit this behavior. She felt that "the drop in the aggressive behavior…related more to…some of the intervention and the…possible controlling and monitoring of that." She also felt that this increased monitoring by teachers was probably due to their changed perceptions. She said, "…maybe it's more monitoring on the part of the teachers because they're more aware of it because of their perceptions being changed" or maybe because the children were more "…aware and managing that better. It could be either or."

Continuing to speak about teachers' observations on the playground, the counselor stated,

> "I just think it raised their awareness of…the instances of [bullying] in general. And because they had raised awareness I'm not totally sure whether or not they knew where they were prior to it…because they weren't thinking about it as much."

This researcher noticed the same feeling from the teachers when meeting with FG1. Teachers had not thought about bullying in preschoolers before the study, but were hearing about

it often through parent questions about the study, discussions with colleagues, and eventually observations, and the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions.

A major piece of evidence indicating a change in teachers' perceptions was brought to light during the interview with the counselor. While the researcher was not informed of this information from the teachers, the counselor felt feedback from the teachers to be significant verification of a change in their perceptions. She recalled several instances of feedback from teachers as she went to their classrooms each week presenting the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions. She spoke of how "throughout the time that I was doing the lessons…the lessons in and of themselves…created more pointing out of circumstances…" from teachers. She received valuable information about students' needs after the classroom visits. She reported that she "…got feedback from [teachers] about well this is happening or…I noticed this about this kid…" She elaborated with a story of how a teacher reported a "mean girl" and how she felt "that's a piece of information that I probably never would have received as a school counselor from that teacher unless we'd had this discussion about what was potential bullying and what isn't." She was pleased that there was "…a lot more reporting of possible issues to me…because we were discussing it regularly." She felt strongly that teachers' perceptions were changed as demonstrated by this new reporting of problematic behaviors.

Lastly, the counselor was asked to reflect on her thoughts about internalizing of vocabulary and bullying intervention strategies taught through the bibliotherapy. She was optimistic about these skills continuing in the classroom after the sessions were completed. She felt that both teachers and students would retain at least some of the language and strategies for later. Speaking about the children, the counselor stated, "…I do think that they, they gained from the vocabulary." The counselor felt strongly that teachers and students benefited from the study

and said, “as they move forward they will be able to carry that [information] and can use it more fluently.”

*Summary*

In this chapter, data from teachers’ perceptions of bullying in young children was analyzed based on: 1) two focus groups, one (FG1) that took place before bibliotherapeutic intervention strategy sessions and a second focus group (FG2) that occurred after bibliotherapeutic intervention strategy sessions; 2) teacher observations of their students on the playground; and 3) an interview with the counselor at the participating school. The following table (Table 3) illustrates the themes identified both in the focus group sessions and in the literature review that were discussed in this chapter.

Table 3. Mutual themes from data and literature

| **Literature Review** | **Focus Group Data** | **Conclusions** | **Changes in Perceptions** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bullying Definitions: Olweus (n.d.) says bullying involves 1) imbalance in power; 2) repeated negative behavior; 3) intent to cause harm | Bullying Definitions: Bullying is 1) hurting someone’s feelings; 2) making a child feel bad; 3) picking on another; 4) finding your power level among the group | Teachers have a general idea of bullying that includes pieces of the definition from the experts, but they sometimes do not include all of the traits that make up bullying behavior. | Teachers’ definitions of bullying broadened and “difficult situations were redefined,” according to the counselor. |
| Purposeful: DeHaan (1997) believes that bullying is purposeful behavior aimed at controlling another. | Purposeful: Teachers described bullying as “purposeful” behavior where children acted with a certain purpose in mind such as getting others in trouble. | Teachers appear to recognize that bullying is “purposeful” behavior and does involve controlling others, although they may think of tattling as this behavior. | Teachers’ opinions of purposeful behavior grew from getting others in trouble to include a wider range of behaviors rather than tattling. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Media: Bullying may be caused by exposure to violence in the media and at home (Gruenert, as cited in Piotrowski & Hoot, 2008; DeHaan, 1997). | Media: Media encourages bullying by exposure to violence on television and with video games, especially with the influence of older siblings. | Teachers recognize the influence media has on young children and how the lack of parental control of media in a child's life may impact children's behavior. Teachers also recognize that children need limits and guidance from parents in this regard. | Teachers' perceptions changed to see their role as more of an advocate for children and they wanted to provide an educational opportunity for parents. |
| Personalities: Olweus (n.d.) believes bullying can be caused by certain personalities, a tendency toward aggressive behavior, environmental factors, peers, and physical strength. | Personalities: Teachers hoped Boy A's parents would report his "personality" to his school so they would be prepared to help him with his aggressive behavior early in the year. | Teachers seem to care for their students and recognize that some personalities will require more guidance, patience, and intervention, but did not associate this behavior with bullying. Teachers also recognized the importance of environmental factors such as home life. | Teachers now seemed to understand that an aggressive personality could be associated with bullying behavior and recognized the importance of all stakeholders working together to prevent bullying. |
| Bullying Behaviors: Scarpaci (2006) concurs with Olweus that bullies use physical (hitting, tripping, shoving), verbal (name-calling, teasing, insulting), and social (exclusion, rejection, gossip) attacks on others. | Bullying Behaviors: Teachers enumerated hitting, name-calling and exclusion as bullying behaviors through their examples in the discussions. | Teachers were aware of some of the categories of typical bullying behaviors. | Teachers became aware of more bullying behaviors and were better able to recognize them in their classes. |
| Teachers: Craig, et al (2000) & Cuban (2007) say teachers are an integral part | Teachers: Teachers felt they needed to watch and make sure bullying doesn't happen. They | Teachers seem to care for their students and feel a responsibility to prepare and empower | Most of these teachers felt a responsibility to care for their |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| of any anti-bullying initiative. | believe teachers are going to be your main source of help for bullying. | them to deal appropriately with bullying behaviors. | students, but did not feel they had training to deal with bullying. Their confidence to intervene with bullying behaviors increased after this study. |
| Parents: Ma (2001) confirms that bullies often have poor parenting. | Parents: Teachers have a concern for lack of parenting skills in aggressive children. | Teachers care for their students and want parents to become better educated with parenting skills and ways to help their children with aggressive behavior. | The teachers asked the director and counselor to have classes for the parents and students on bullying next year. |
| Power: Olweus (n.d.) states that bullying involves an imbalance in power due to size or social clout. | Power: Teachers discussed power brought about by size, social clout, and age. | Teachers recognized the presence of power in their students, but did not necessarily connect it with bullying behaviors. | Teachers' insight into bullying behaviors increased so that they may more often recognize power struggles (that might lead to bullying) in their students. |

A baseline of teachers' perceptions of bullying in young children was established by an initial focus group that met before any bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions took place. Discussions in FG1 revealed a consensus that these teachers of young children were aware of the general concept of bullying from apparent prior knowledge. However, little if any thought had been given to bullying in preschool before the contemplation of this study. During FG1 participants mentioned that bullying was purposeful, intimidating, and sneaky. While their definitions contained similarities with Olweus'(n.d.) definition of bullying, the concept that

bullying is a repetitive behavior often aimed at the same person for an extended period of time was not included in their explanations.

Teachers did believe bullying was “purposeful” which could imply intent to harm, but might not imply harm either. While an attempt to control others, which could cause purposeful behavior, is a part of bullying, Olweus (n.d.) does purport that bullying includes an intention to harm another. This may have been the feeling of these teachers, but that was not clear from our discourse. A definition of harm was not considered in the discussion either.

In fact, several participants admitted in both FG1 and FG2 that when first asked to participate in this study, they were skeptical as to whether bullying transpired in preschool children at all. However, the bibliotherapeutic interventions and observations during this study have altered their opinions in this regard. During FG2, the teachers were convinced that bullying does occur in preschool children and quoted several stories that illustrated their beliefs. The teacher participants also reported an increased consciousness of bullying and demonstrated an atmosphere of cooperation in identifying and stopping bullying behaviors as a team. “I think it just made us more aware,” 4b1 said, “we saw the light bulb come on…” Several teachers expressed their feeling of being “more educated” after the bibliotherapeutic intervention classes. This study has “broadened our definition of bullying,” according to another teacher.

A sense of some urgency has appeared in this group and a desire to protect victims and assist bullies and their families has surfaced. Therefore, they have requested that the counselor continue to present the bibliotherapeutic intervention strategy classes to their students again next year. “And in actual fact, we have actually requested that [the counselor] come next year and do the same lessons in our class, because I really liked, you know, liked them.” Teachers referred to information and vocabulary learned in the bibliotherapeutic sessions after the sessions were

completed when interacting with the students in the classroom and on the playground. Teachers would remind the children of the counselor's words and strategies and reported that these reminders most often sparked a quick and appropriate response to the situation in question. "The only reason…the kids are misbehaving in the way they are is because they don't know yet." Everyone agreed that young children need a foundation of knowledge that provides appropriate and inappropriate ways to respond to aggressive behavior. Teacher 4a1 stated, "…this [bibliotherapeutic intervention information] is the foundation that they need moving forward."

These teachers have also requested more education for the parents in their school. As a whole, the participants were surprised at the lack of support for the bullying study and the lack of education about the subject from their parents. Since the study revealed what the teachers described as "a large percentage of parents" that did not believe bullying occurred in preschool, these educators have been distressed. They realize, as do several of the researchers such as Espelage and Swearer (2004) and Olweus (n.d.) that home influence plays a major role in children's bullying behavior. Families are "major socializing agents" for children, according to Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano (2009, p. 20). Teacher 5a1 felt that parents "…don't realize what [bullying] is and they don't realize what it can lead to, you know." Therefore, the participants are petitioning their director and counselor to have parent meetings at the beginning of school to explain the definition of bullying and to enlighten these adults as to the proactive stance this school is taking on the subject.

It is their hope that with more education, parents will become partners with them in battling bullying behaviors in these young children. The bibliotherapeutic sessions have brought bullying to the forefront not only with the teachers, but with the students and parents. Parental awareness goes hand-in-hand with teacher awareness as they work together for the safety of the

children. Espelage and Swearer (2004) recommend that any bully prevention program involve all stakeholders. When parents and teachers unite, a comprehensive plan of bullying prevention may be developed that highlights the individual needs of the school, as is recommended by Olweus (as cited in Carpenter, 2005).

Both the preschool director and the school counselor from the participating school reported that as a result of this study, two individual students volunteered information about two different bullying situations that happened to them earlier in the school year. One child spoke to her parent about repeated exclusion for not complying with another child's directives and the parent contacted the school. A second child reported exclusion because of not wearing the correct clothing as prescribed by the bully. Both of these accounts were reviewed by the school and found to be legitimate concerns. They were addressed by the director, counselor, parents, and teachers. Teacher 4c1 told about how one little girl's behavior in her class had "improved tremendously" after the counselor's bibliotherapeutic intervention classes. "I think that through [the counselor] and through this program and everything, she's really come a long way, so I'm really proud of that."

A second teacher detailed the story of another little girl whose behavior changed for the better because of the counselor's bibliotherapeutic intervention lessons. Without teacher support and embracing of the bibliotherapeutic prevention strategies, the children would not have felt free and supported enough to verbalize their concerns. As a result of this study and the commitment of the teachers involved, not only is the participating school going to incorporate the bullying bibliotherapeutic intervention classes into their curriculum for next year, but the director and teachers are discussing developing a policy for the school that specifically addresses bullying behaviors.

The researcher investigated the question of how the application of bibliotherapeutic intervention affects teachers' perceptions of bullying among young children ages four and five. The above stories demonstrate that teachers' perceptions have changed as a result of this study. Teachers are now more aware of bullying in their school and have taken steps to address it within their classrooms and school culture.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Findings

Educators today face many challenges and pressures. Among those challenges is widespread bullying behavior that negatively impacts learning and causes serious harm to students. The subject of this paper, how bibliotherapeutic intervention affected teachers' perceptions of bullying behavior in their students ages four and five, offers assistance to educators, parents and the community in dealing with this phenomenon. This chapter is a summary of this study and the major conclusions reached from data analysis in Chapter Four. It addresses how findings from this study inform the research question. Also included is a discussion of the implications for improvement of educational practice and recommendations for further inquiry.

### *Summary of Study*

#### *Introduction*

This qualitative study examined how the implementation of bibliotherapeutic intervention in their classrooms affected teachers' perceptions of occurrences of bullying behavior in their students ages four and five. It is clear from research that bullying is a serious and egregious global concern that interferes with learning and school attendance. Beane (2008) reminds us that "when a child is bullied, he may be afraid to go to school" (p. 13).

While more attention has recently been given to bullying and its devastating results, little has been written regarding this aggressive behavior in young children from second grade to prekindergarten. With the No Child Left Behind mandate, schools must be accountable for meeting the needs of all students. Therefore, some states have directed the implementation of bullying prevention programs. However, with high demands and budget cuts, violence

prevention initiatives may be reduced or eliminated (Werle, 2006). Research also confirms that although educators play a key role in preventing bullying, in the past they have done little to acknowledge or address it in their schools. Mishna et al. (2005) found that "teachers were unaware that 10 out of 17 children were bullied" (p. 723). Mishna et al. goes on to say that teachers are influential in the lives of their students and should be responding to bullying in their classrooms. This study adds to the knowledge of this "complex phenomenon" by examining teachers' understanding of bullying and the aspects of recognizing and responding to it (Mishna et al., p. 721).

The literature review in Chapter Two pointed out that bullying exists in young children as early as three years of age and may be caused by several factors ranging from media influence to home dynamics. Bullying takes on many forms involving: 1) psychological, 2) physical, and 3) verbal harm. Evidence shows that bullying has long-term consequences of increased violent behaviors and a higher propensity for criminal behavior for bullies (Olweus, 1993). Bullying also may fragment or marginalize student populations. Victims are at risk of feeling isolated, disengaging in school and possibly committing suicide (Coloroso, 2008). Studies have shown that teachers are key to decreasing bullying in schools (Hanish et al., 2004). Thus, there is a need to research what teachers think about bullying and how they perceive it in their school environment.

*Major Themes from the Literature Review*

The conceptual framework for this study was Noddings' Ethic of Care that purports educators have a responsibility to address individual student needs rather than attending only to their academic proficiency. The researcher used the following four tenets of Noddings' Ethic of Care as a lens through which to examine the data: 1) modeling, 2) dialogue, 3) practice, and 4)

confirmation. Evidence of each tenet was present in the focus group data, with dialogue and modeling, respectively, the most frequently occurring. Participants were using these tenets as effective ways to demonstrate care and concern for their students, but were not connecting these traits with preventing or reducing bullying behavior since they had not acknowledged the presence of bullying prior to the study.

Other themes from the literature review were: 1) media, 2) personalities, and 3) empowerment. Participants were cognizant of the effect violence in the media has on children's aggressive behavior and spoke about how their young students were exposed to inappropriate television and video games through older siblings at home. It was suggested in the literature review that seeing violent behaviors in the media as heroic might influence young children toward aggression (Werle, 2006). Teachers felt that students' personalities could be altered by playing certain violent video games. However, these participants did not recognize media as an influence on bullying until after the intervention presentations.

Olweus (n.d.) believes that bullying may be associated with certain aggressive personality types. Participants agreed with this premise and stated that some students seemed to have a proclivity towards aggression. After the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions, participants felt that these aggressive children needed assistance in finding strategies to help control their behavior.

Participants mentioned empowerment as a major factor in preparing their young children to face bullying and take care of themselves and others who might become victims. While not all of the discussion about empowerment was labeled as such, much of the dialogue centered on readiness for elementary school ahead. In FG2, after the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions, the participating counselor suggested that children should be outfitted with viable bullying

response options. She felt that bystanders as well as victims become “anxious and nervous and scared” when confronted with bullying. Teachers agreed with this argument.

*Major Themes from the Data*

Themes emerging from the data were: 1) name-calling, 2) intimidation, 3) power, and 4) parental attitudes and education. The majority of these themes were presented in stories told of aggressive behaviors in the participants’ students, many of which were observed during this study. While researchers spoke of how extreme parenting (either very strict or very permissive) contributed to bullying, these participants spoke of the lack of parenting skills and education that impacted their school after their focusing attention on bullying. Many parents were uneasy about having the study take place at their school, and some felt their children might be the reason the school was having the study on bullying.

Name-calling, intimidation, and a power struggle were all behaviors that participants observed in their students, but had not connected to bullying before the intervention sessions. Given the information they received in the bibliotherapeutic intervention classes, some teachers recognized the serious nature of the above bullying behaviors and their consequences for the first time. During FG1, which occurred before the bibliotherapeutic sessions, participants did not report a single instance of bullying on the playground. However, during FG2, participants discussed five instances of what they described as bullying behavior witnessed on the playground, thus demonstrating their perceptions had changed. After the bibliotherapeutic interventions, teachers appeared more confident in identifying bullying behaviors among their students and in dealing with bullying, although all of their examples might not coincide with the definition of bullying provided in this literature review.

It was obvious to this researcher that these teachers cared about their students. After this study, the participants gained a sense of urgency for change in recognizing and addressing bullying in their school in order to prepare their students to deal with this aggressive behavior. Along with their feeling of enlightenment or increased knowledge, participants felt it their duty to be the agents for change in their school and advocated for more education for all stakeholders.

*Data Collection and Analysis*

Focus groups, observations, and an interview were instruments used for collecting data in this qualitative study. These instruments allowed the researcher to gain first-hand knowledge of participants' perceptions of bullying in their classrooms. Focus groups are valuable for exploring topics in a natural setting that may be difficult for participants to discuss. Observations are also useful when explaining subject matter that is sensitive in nature. Some researchers believe that all qualitative studies should include some type of observations (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The interview of the participating school's counselor was especially salient in that it provided insight into the culture of the classrooms of the participating teachers and their perceptions before and after bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions. Having an insider such as this counselor, who became the eyes and ears of the researcher almost daily during the entire study, was most valuable in validating and triangulating this study. Her testimony during the interview substantiated the researchers' findings regarding changes in perceptions of participants before and after bibliotherapeutic interventions. Member checking and peer debriefing were also utilized to increase validation.

*Discussion of Findings*

Major findings from this study of how implementation of bibliotherapeutic intervention in their classrooms affected teachers' perceptions of occurrences of bullying in their students

aged four and five included an increased awareness of bullying among teacher participants and parents at the participating school. Participants overall were skeptical as to whether bullying existed in preschool children when anticipating this study and admitted to a lack of education regarding this topic. However, after the bibliotherapeutic intervention classes, participants not only recognized that bullying existed in their students, but became committed to addressing it as a united faculty. Teachers were more familiar with bullying behavior and watchful of those behaviors after the intervention sessions.

Before the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions, participants' definition of bullying included some principles of Olweus' (n.d.) definition of bullying, but lacked the stipulation that bullying was repetitive behavior directed toward the same person over time with intent to harm. The participants' definitions before the intervention classes were varied and often involved hurting someone's feelings in an isolated instance and did not include the aspect of harm.

After the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions, all participants described an increased level of consciousness and education regarding bullying. Teachers felt they had "broadened" their definition of bullying and vocabulary, using words such as "exclusion" and "purposeful" in connection with bullying. Most of the teachers continued to use acquired information and vocabulary from these bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions with their students after the sessions were completed. These teachers especially felt the need for more parental education and were cognizant of the importance of the home influence on aggressive behaviors in their students. They, as the literature also suggested, felt a need for a uniform commitment from all stakeholders to prevent bullying.

As a result of this study, two instances of bullying were reported by children from the participating school to their parents (who reported the instances to the teachers involved). These

reports were taken seriously and addressed individually by the school. Teachers conveyed the need to intervene on behalf of these students, especially due to their young age and developmental stage. The participating counselor, in particular, was concerned with the fact that these children were not equipped to solve these problems by themselves. Teachers involved in this study felt that the preschool was the time and place for children to gain information that prepared them to make appropriate decisions when faced with bullying. By the end of this study, the commitment to prevent bullying was so strong that the director of this preschool was contemplating creating a policy for the entire school that outlines specific consequences for bullying.

*Findings Related to the Literature*

Results from this study mirrored much of the research from the literature review. Teacher participants readily admitted their lack of knowledge about bullying in young children and thus a lack of responding appropriately to this behavior, which was mentioned by Frey et al. (2005), Siris and Osterman (2004), Hanish et al. (2004), Beran (2006), Espelage and Swearer (2008), and Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2002). Data analysis also revealed teachers felt that bullying involved an imbalance in power, specifically due to size. Olweus (1993), Frey et al., (2005) and Sanders and Phye (2008) discussed the imbalance of power inherent in bullying situations where victims are smaller, outnumbered or lack social clout.

The theme of media influence was briefly discussed in the literature, but was given more attention in the focus group discussions. Teachers felt that parents were exerting little control over their children's viewing of violent television programming and their playing of violent video games. When influenced by examples of these aggressive behaviors over time, teachers

believed children would come to feel this was acceptable behavior. Coloroso (2008) agreed that media has a strong impact on children's views.

*Unanticipated Findings*

This author was shocked to find that she was met with more than an ambivalent attitude toward this study by some. This topic brought what appeared to be a high level of anxiety to several educators who were approached by the researcher regarding the topic of bullying. One elementary principal adamantly refused to discuss the possibility of conducting this study at her school and advised the researcher to rethink her research design. This principal believed parents of kindergarten students would not want to have their children discuss the topic of bullying. She stated that she would cooperate only if instructed to do so by the school district. Other educators, while appearing to be interested in the topic of bullying, clearly did not want to participate in a study about it. When obtaining approval to conduct research at the participating school, the researcher was informed that had she not known the counselor at the school, the researcher would definitely not have been allowed to conduct her research there.

Furthermore, both the participants in this study and the researcher were astonished at the resistance of some parents to allow their children to be present for their counselor's bibliotherapeutic intervention classes on bullying. And, indeed the parents of three out of the 64 students refused permission for their children to sit in the classroom during these sessions.

This research was completed in May during the school year. After the summer break following the study, one parent of a student who was present for the bibliotherapeutic interventions thanked the counselor for having these sessions. Given the hesitancy of some parents to support the intervention sessions, both the counselor and the researcher were pleased to hear one parent applaud these sessions as beneficial for her child. This parent recounted a

story that occurred over the summer when she saw the counselor at the beginning of the next school year. Her son was at a neighborhood pool with friends and recognized bullying behavior happening with his friends. He immediately walked away from the group and reported this behavior to his mother. This parent was grateful that her son recognized what was happening in the group and was not fearful, but was empowered to report this behavior. Thus, there were lasting effects from the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions on the students as well as the teachers.

*Conclusions and Limitations of Findings*

The question under research in this study was how the application of classroom bibliotherapy intervention affected teachers' perceptions of occurrences of bullying behavior in their students aged four and five. Teacher discussions in FG1 before bibliotherapeutic intervention did not include any reports of instances of bullying on the playground; yet, after the interventions, in FG2, several teachers reported evidence of bullying behaviors in their students.

It is evident from this study that teachers' awareness of the existence of bullying increased as a result of the bibliotherapeutic interventions. Teachers reported bullying concerns for their students to the counselor for the first time. The counselor reported she would never have received this information had it not been for a raised level of consciousness regarding bullying among teachers in this study. This increased awareness led to actions by teachers that included teachers' suggestions for ways to assist their population with bullying prevention and intervention.

Use of bibliotherapeutic intervention strategies proved to be a beneficial way to convey definitions of bullying, vocabulary, and prevention strategies to young children and their teachers. Given the counselor's expertise in dealing with sensitive topics such as bullying, she

was the first choice to present these bibliotherapeutic intervention classes. Classroom teachers may provide these intervention classes, but would need training to identify and support any children who may have adverse reactions from these classroom discussions (Olweus, n.d.).

Teacher training and commitment are paramount to the success of any bullying prevention program. In-service programs that focus on bullying and pre-service teacher training regarding bullying would be advantageous. Mishna et al. (2005), state that teachers are on the "front line in addressing bullying" and "knowledge and training…is critical to understand the factors that influence how teachers understand and respond to bullying…" (p. 734).

This researcher believes that most teachers genuinely care for their students, but lack skills to adequately recognize and act on bullying behavior. While little education apparently takes place regarding bullying in general, most of the training that does occur focuses on the victim. While the victim without a doubt needs this attention, research from the literature review suggests that bullies and bystanders are in need of assistance, too. This author would like to think that teachers reading this study will work to address the needs of all involved: the bully, the victim, and the bystander. Comprehensive bullying prevention plans customized for individual schools hopefully would include strategies for all involved.

Teachers who exhibit the tenets of Noddings' Ethic of Care (2005a) may find they have a more cohesive classroom culture with less aggressive behavior. When observing the study participants, one could see their desire for a strong, positive relationship with their students and families. Several researchers from this literature review tout the benefits of students being cared-for, feeling they are valuable contributing members of their classes and having a strong sense of belonging. Listening to students may be difficult when classrooms are overcrowded, time is short, and accountability pressures loom large; however, much is gained by this one act, such as

developing a child's trust and confidence. This trust might translate into a classroom atmosphere where students are willing to take risks and are supportive of each other. A supportive environment most likely would be less tolerant of bullying, too. Ideally, educators will create a classroom climate that encourages caring relationships and discourages the opportunity for bullying behaviors. This is essential for student success.

Students require and deserve a safe, cordial environment that is conducive to learning. While bullying begins at an early age, collaboration, self-regulated learning, and high expectations for all students may help build a classroom community of equality and camaraderie that shuns bullying. Bullying is cruel and destructive behavior that does not need to exist in our society today. Teachers are vital in diminishing this epidemic of hurtful behavior that seems to be growing ever stronger.

*Implications for Action*

As a result of this study, the participating school is adopting plans for increased education for their students and their parents. The counselor at the participating school is planning to offer classes for parents and will continue to use the bibliotherapeutic interventions from this study with her students this fall. Given data from this study, it is hoped that other educators will begin new initiatives to examine their own awareness regarding bullying and its prevention. As James Thurber (n.d.) said, "Let us not look back in anger or forward in fear, but around in awareness." Hopefully, efforts will be made to educate stakeholders and all will take this behavior seriously.

It is the researcher's desire that this study inspire a sense of urgency for action to protect and empower our youngest students with strategies to respond appropriately to bullying. This study may serve as a model for other schools and their stakeholders to investigate the possibility that bullying exists in their schools and to design individual plans to intervene on behalf of their

students. Early childhood educators can no longer act as if bullying is not a problem for our students. But, they will need training and support from districts, administrators, and parents to implement any successful bullying prevention program.

The researcher used the results of this study to personally reflect on her own practice, school policies, and future research that might be needed in this field. No suggestions were made to the participating school other than allowing them to read the findings of this study.

The study should add to the body of literature on this subject and its implications for young children aged four and five. This researcher is optimistic that this research will aid in emancipating young children from the grip of this injurious affliction.

*Recommendations for Further Research*

Research on the topic of bullying in young children has only just begun. There are many areas in which further investigation is sorely needed. While literature tells us that bullying occurs in all races and ethnicities, this researcher was unable to find significant research that addresses the connections between bullying and race, socioeconomic level or intelligence. Should we discover significant findings in these areas, more effective interventions may result.

Most research discovered by this author focused on children over the age of eight. Therefore, benefits may result in replicating some of the existing research with younger participants. While most of the original research on bullying has been done in other countries, little is known about the actual research and whether any results have been found that might speak to the needs of young children.

Other interesting topics for further research are: 1) examining the medical records of bullies; 2) investigating criminal cases involving bullies; 3) exploring the role that home, divorce, siblings, and birth order play in bullying; 4) media influence on bullying; and, 5)

English language learners and propensity for bullying; 6) long-term results of bullying prevention in young children. The field of bullying in young children is wide open and ripe for further scrutiny.

*Concluding Remarks*

As seen in this chapter, the topic of bullying is a sensitive one that brings many prior experiences and preconceived notions to mind. Although this study had a difficult beginning, its results were valuable and insightful. Teacher participants came full circle, indicating a total change in perception, from doubting the existence of bullying to being the champions of caring for their students and working to see that bullying is no longer tolerated at their school. Teachers must be committed to establishing a relationship with each of their students that will foster trust and caring. If educators are not willing to face bullying and seek assistance rather than ignoring it or pretending it does not exist, our students will suffer as was demonstrated by the two reports of bullying that came to light as a result of this study. The outcomes of this aggressive behavior are too grim to disregard. Bullying is not a natural part of growing up nor is it simply tattling when children report their experience with hurtful behavior. It inflicts serious harm on others, some of whom never recover.

# References

Aiex, N. (n.d.). Bibliotherapy. Retrieved July 10, 2010 from www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/digests/d82.html.

Alexander, C. (2008). *Lucy and the Bully*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman and Company.

Arseneault, L.,Walsh, E., Trzesniewski, K., Newcombe, R., Caspi, A., & Moffitt, T. (2006). Bullying victimization uniquely contributes to adjustment problems in young children: A nationally representative cohort study. *Pediatrics*,118(1), 130-138.

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Barboza, G., Schiamberg, L., Oehmke, J., Korzeniewski, S., Post, L., & Heraux, C. (2009). Individual characteristics and the multiple contexts of adolescent bullying: An ecological perspective. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 38(1),101-121.

Beane, A. (2005). *The Bully Free Classroom* (Rev. ed.), Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, Inc.

Beane, A. (2008). *Protect Your Child From Bullying*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Beran, T. (2006). Preparing teachers to manage school bullying: the hidden curriculum. *Journal of Educational Thought*, 40(2), 119-128.

Binkow, H. (2008). *Howard B. Wigglebottom Learns About Bullies*. Bel Air, MD: Thunderbolt Publishing.

Blatchford, P. & Sharp, S. (1994). Editor's introduction. In P. Blatchford & S. Sharp (Eds)., *Breaktime and the School* (pp.66-80). New York: Routledge.

Bond, Bill (2010). *Creating Safe and Supportive Classrooms.* Presentation at SPAGE webinar on October 1, 2010, from www.pagefoundation.org/spage.

Boulton, M. (1997). Teachers' views on bullying: Definitions, attitudes, and ability to to cope. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 67(2), 223-233.

Bullying 'Starting Younger and Younger.' (2010). *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*. Retrieved April 17, 2010, from www.ajc.com.

Carpenter, M. (2005, September). Bullying. Paper presented at the bully prevention program organizational meeting of Bascombe Elementary School in Cherokee County, Woodstock, GA.

Chang, L. (2003). Variable effects of children's aggression, social withdrawal, and prosocial leadership as functions of teacher beliefs and behaviors. *Child Development*, 74(2), 535-548.

Christie, K. Stateline. (2005). *Phi Delta Kappan*, June 725-726.

Collins, J. (2001). *Good to Great*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

Coloroso, B. (2008). *The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander*. New York: HarperCollins/Quill.

Cooper, D. & Snell, J. (2003). Bullying is not just a kid thing. *Educational Leadership*, 60(6), 22-29.

Cormier, R. (1974). *The Chocolate War*. NewYork: Dell.

Craig, W. M., Pepler, D., & Atlas, R. (2000). Observations of bullying on the playground and in the classroom. *School Psychology International*, 21(1), 22-36.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches (2nd Ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design (3rd Ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crick, N., Casas, J. & Mosher, M. (1997). Relational and overt aggression in preschool. *Developmental Psychology*, 33(4), 579-588.

Cuban, L. (2007). Hugging the middle: Teaching in an era of accountability. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 15(1). Retrieved December 4, 2009, from http://epaa.asu/epaa/v15n1.

DeHaan, L. (1997). *Bullies*. Retrieved April 17, 2010, from http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/famsci/fs570w.htm.

Deiro, J. (2003). Do your students know you care? *Educational Leadership*, 60(6), 60-62.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and Education*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Dobies, K. (2010, April 8). Grab the bully by the horns. *East Cobb Neighbor Newspaper*, 42(14), 1.

Doll, B. & Cummings, J. (2008). *Transforming School Mental Health Services*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Entenman, J., Murnen, T., & Hendricks, C. (2005). Victims, bullies, and bystanders in K-3 literature. *The Reading Teacher*, 59(4), 352-364.

Esch, G. (2008). Children's literature: Perceptions of bullying. *Childhood Education*. 84(6), 379-382.

Espelage, D., & Asdiao, C. (2001). Interviews with middle school students: Bullying, victimization, and contextual factors. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, 2, 49-62.

Espelage, D. & Swearer, S. (2004). Introduction: a social-ecological framework of bullying among youth. In S. M. Swearer & D. L. Espelage (Eds.), *Bullying in American Schools* (pp. 1-12). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Espelage, D. & Swearer, S. (2008). Current perspectives on linking school bullying research. In T. W. Miller (Ed.), *School Violence and Primary Prevention*. (pp. 335-353). New York: Springer.

Forgan, J. (2002). Using bibliotherapy to teach problem solving. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 38(2), 75-82.

Fox, C. & Boulton, M. (2005).The social skills problems of victims of bullying: Self, peer and teacher perceptions. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 75, 313-328.

Freeman, G., Hooks, L., & Hinton, A. (2008, March). *Bibliotherapy and bullies: Using children's literature to secure a safe, more tolerant environment for young children.* Paper presented at the Association for Childhood Education International, Atlanta, GA.

Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Frey, K., Hirschstein, M., Snell, J., Edstrom, L., MacKenzie, E., Broderick, C. (2005). Reducing playground bullying and supporting beliefs: an experimental trial of the steps to respect program. *Developmental Psychology*, 41(3), 479-491.

Garbarino, J. & deLara, E. (2003). Words can hurt forever. *Educational Leadership*, 60(6), 18-21.

Gardner, H. (2003, April). *Multiple intelligences after twenty years*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Associational meeting, Chicago, Illinois.

Glasser,W. (2006, February). *Every Student Can Succeed*. Paper presented at the Principals' Meeting, Memphis, TN.

Good, T. & Brophy, J. (2008). *Looking in Classrooms* (10th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Goodlad, J. (2004, 1984). *A Place Called School* (20th anniversary ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Gottfredson, D. & Gottfredson, G. (2002). Quality of school-based prevention programs: Results from a national survey. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 39(1), 3-35.

Grbich, C. (2007) *Qualitative Data Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Gregory, K. & Vessey, J. (2004). Bibliotherapy: A strategy to help students with bullying. *The Journal of School Nursing*, 20(3), 127-133.

Grudens-Schuck, B., Allen, B., & Larson, K. (2004). *Focus Group Fundamentals*, Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Extension. http://socserver.soc.iastate.edu/extension/presentations/publications/bulletin/PM1969B.pdf, retrieved March 21, 2010.

Hallford, A., Borntrager, C., & Davis, J. (2006). Evaluation of a bullying prevention program. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 2006, 21(1), 91-101.

Hanish, L., Kochenderfer-Ladd, B., Fabes, R., Martin, C. & Denning, D. (2004) Bullying among young children: The influence of peers and teachers. In Espelage, D. & Swearer, S. (Eds)., *Bullying in American Schools: A Socio Ecological Perspective on Prevention and Intervention* (pp. 141-159). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum Associates.

Hanish, L. & Rodkin, P. (2007). Bridging children's social development and social network analysis. In P. C. Rodkin & L. D. Hanish (Eds)., *Social Network Analysis and Children's Peer Relationships* (pp.1-8). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Howard, K., Flora, J., & Griffin, M. (1999). Violence-prevention programs in schools: State of the science and implications for future research. *Applied and Preventive Psychology*, Vol. 8, 197-215.

Inlay, L. (2003).Values: The implicit curriculum. *Educational Leadership,* 60(6), 69-71.

Johnson, C., Wan, G., Templeton, R., Graham, L. & Sattler, J. (2000) *"Booking it" to peace: Bibliotherapy guidelines for teachers*. Bradley University. Retrieved October 1, 2010, from http://eric.ed.gov.

Kasen, S., Johnson, J., & Cohen, P. (2004). The effects of school climate on changes in aggressive and other behaviors related to bullying. In D. L. Espelage & S. M. Swearer (Eds)., *Bullying in American Schools* (pp. 187-210).

Katch, J. (2003). *They Don't Like Me*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Katz, M., Noddings, N., & Strike, K. (1999). *Justice and Caring: The Search for Common Ground in Education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Kersey, K. & Masterson, M. (2010). Is tattling a bad word? How to help children navigate the playground. *Childhood Education*, 86(4), 260-263.

Kotter, J. (1996). *Leading Change*. New York: Holtzbrinck Publishers, LLC.

Krueger, R. & Casey, M. (2000). *Focus Groups: A practical guide for applied research* (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Leff, S., Power, T., & Goldstein, A. (2004). Outcome measures to assess the effectiveness of bullying-prevention programs in the schools. In D. L. Espelage & S. M. Swearer (Eds)., *Bullying in American Schools* (pp. 269-293). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Limber, S. & Nation, M. (n.d.). *Bullying among children and youth*. Retrieved April 17, 2010, from www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov.

Lincoln, A. (n.d.) *World my son starts school today* (as reprinted in 2008). Retrieved January 30, 2010, from www.shvoong.com.

Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. (2000). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds)., *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 163-188). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ma, X. (2001). Bullying and being bullied: To what extent are bullies also victims? *American Education Research Journal*, 38(2), 351-370.

Malecki, C. & Demaray, M. (2004). The role of social support in bullies, victims, and bully-victims. In D. L. Espelage & S. M. Swearer (Eds)., *Bullying in American Schools* (pp.211-225).

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. (2006). *Designing Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Maslow, A. (1954,1987). *Motivation and Personality* (3rd ed.). New York: HarperCollins.

McNamee, A. & Mercurio, M. (2008). School-wide intervention in the childhood bullying triangle. *Childhood Education*. 84(6), 370-377.

McNeilly-Choque, M., Hart, C., Robinson, C., Nelson, L., & Olsen, S. (1996). Overt and relational aggression on the playground: correspondence among different informants. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 11, 47-67.

Miller, C. (2010). *Phoebe Prince's final days: Bullied girl suffered "intolerable" abuse before suicide, say court docs*." Retrieved September 18, 2010, from www.cbsnews.com.

Mishna, F., Scarcello, I., Pepler, D. & Wiener, J. (2005). Teachers' understanding of bullying. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 28(4), 718-738.

Morgan, P. (2002). *Teaching tolerance in the zero-tolerance zone: One war against terror that we can win*. Unpublished manuscript.

Nansel, T., Overpeck, M., Pilla, R., Ruan, J., Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying behaviors among US youth. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285(16), 2094-2100.

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2001). *National Institute of Health and Human Development News Release*. Retrieved October 8, 2008, from www.nichd.nih.gov.

Nelsen, J., Erwin, C., & Duffy, R. (2007). *Positive Discipline* (3rd ed.). New York: Three Rivers Press.

Newman, D., Horne, A., & Bartolomucci, C. (2000). *Bully Busters: A teacher's manual*. Champaign: Research Press.

Noddings, N. (2005a). *The Challenge to Care in Schools* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Noddings, N. (2005b). 'Caring in education,' *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education*. Retrieved December 5 2009, from www.infed.org/biblio/noddings_caring_in_education.htm.

Olweus, D. (2002). *Bullying at school: what we know and what we can do* (4th ed.). Cambridge: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd.

Olweus, D. (2003). A profile of bullying at school. *Educational Leadership*, 60(6), 12-17.

Olweus, D. (n.d.). *Olweus bullying prevention program*. Retrieved March 21, 2010, from www.olweus.org.

O'Neill, A. (2002). *The Recess Queen*, New York: Scholastic Press.

Ormrod, J. (2008). *Human Learning* (5th ed.). New Jersey: Pearson Education.

Piotrowski, D. & Hoot, J. (2008). Bullying and violence in schools: What teachers should know and do. *Childhood Education*. 84(6), 357-363.

Rigby, K. (2006). What we can learn from evaluated studies of school-based programs. In S. R. Jimerson & M. J. Furlong's *Handbook of School Violence and School Safety: From Research to Practice* (pp. 325-228). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum & Associates.

Rivers, I., Poteat, V., Noret, N., & Ashurst, N. (2009). Observing bullying at school: The mental health implications of witness status. *Psychology Quarterly*, 24(4), 211-223.

Rozalski, M., Stewart, A., & Miller, J. (2010). Bibliotherapy: Helping children cope with life's challenges. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 47(1), 33-37.

Sanders, C. & Phye, G. (2008). *Bullying Implications for the Classroom*. St. Louis, MO: Elsevier Academic Press.

Scarpaci, R. (2006). Bullying effective strategies for its prevention. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 42(4), 170-174.

Schaafsma, D. (2003). Bully. *English Journal*, 92(5), 76.

Schwandt, T. (2007). *The Sage Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Seskin, S. & Shamblin, A. (2002). Don't laugh at me [Recorded by Peter, Paul & Mary]. On *the very best of peter, paul, & mary*. [CD]. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Records. (2005).

Shapiro, H. & Purpel, D. (2004). *Critical Social Issues in American Education* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Singer, A., Murphy, M., & Hofstra, S. (2003). *Teaching to Learn, Teaching to Teach*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Siris, K. & Osterman, K. (2004). Interrupting the cycle of bullying and victimization in the elementary classroom. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 86(4), 288-291.

Siskin, S. & Shamblin, A. (2002). *Don't Laugh at Me*. Berkeley: Tricycle Press.

Smith, J., Schneider, B., Smith, P. & Ananiadou, K. (2004). The effectiveness of whole-school anti-bullying programs: A synthesis of evaluation research. *School Psychology Review*, 33(4), 547-560.

Smith, M. (2004). Nel Noddings, the ethics of care and education, *the encyclopedia of informal education*, www.infed.org/thinkers/noddings.htm., retrieved March 2, 2010.

Smith, P. & Brain, P. (2000). Bullying in schools: Lessons from two decades of research. *Aggressive Behavior*, 26, 1-9.

Smolowe, J., Herbst, D., Egan, N., Rakowsky, J. & Mascia, K. (2010, April 26). Bullied to death: Inside her torment. *People*, 73(16) 66-70.

Stop Bullying, Speak Up. (2010). *Cartoon Network*. Retrieved November 6, 2010, from www.cartoonnetwork.com.

Swearer, S. Espelage, D., & Napolitano, S. (2009). *Bullying and Intervention*. New York: Guilford Press.

Thompson, B. & McAlpine, G. (2006). Resiliency: Helping children to beat the odds. In T. E. Deering (Ed.), Perspectives on American Education (pp. 219-234). Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt.

Thompson, M., Grace, C., & Cohen, L. (2001). *Best Friends, Worst Enemies*. New York: Random House Publishing.

Thornton, S. (2001, April). *Caring and competence: Nel noddings' curriculum thought.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Seattle, WA.

Thurber, J. (n.d.) *BrainyQuote*. Retrieved October 9, 2010, from www.BrainyQuote.com.

Townsend-Butterworth, D. (n.d.).*Teasing and bullying: No laughing matter*. Retrieved April 17, 2010, from www2.scholastic.com.

Tresniowski, A., Egan, N., Herbst, D., Triggs, C., Messer, L., Fowler, J., Levy, D. & Shabeeb (2010, October 18). Tormented to death? *People*, 74(14) 56-58.

Veenstra, R., Lindenberg, S., Oldehinkel, A., DeWinter, A., Verhulst, F. (2005). Bullying and victimization in elementary schools: a comparison of bullies, victims, bully/ victims and uninvolved preadolescents. *Developmental Psychology*, 41(4), 672-682.

Viadero, D. (2010). Studies probe 'ecology' of bullying. *Education Week*, 29(32), 1, 18-19. Retrieved May 22, 2010, from www.edweek.org.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Walker, D. (2009, September 15). Bullying measure gives little protection. *Marietta Daily Journal Newspapers*. Retrieved May 1, 2010, from mdjonline.com.

Wartik, N. (2001). Bullying a serious business. *Child*, February, 78-84.

Webster, M. (1997). *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (10th ed.). Springfield, Massachusetts: Meriam-Webster, Incorporated.

Weiner, M. & Miller, M. (2006). Deaf children and bullying: directions for future research. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 2006, 151(1), 61-70.

Weissberg, R., Resnik, H., Payton, J. & O'Brien, M. (2003). Evaluating social and emotional learning programs. *Educational Leadership*, 2003, 60(6), 46-50.

Weissbourd, R. (2003). Moral teachers, moral students. *Educational Leadership*, 60(6), 6-11.

Werle, G. (2006).Taking steps to promote safer schools. *Journal of School Health*,76(4), 156-158.

Whitted, K. & Dupper, D. (2005). Best practices for preventing or reducing bullying in schools. *Children and Schools*, 27(3), 167-175.

Yoon, J. & Kerber, K. (2003). *Bullying: Elementary teachers' attitudes and intervention strategies*, www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/uploads/docs/690027.pdf, retrieved March 21, 2010.

# APPENDIX A

## FOCUS GROUP GUIDING QUESTIONS

## PRE-STATEGIES

1. What is bullying?
2. Does bullying exist in young children ages 4, and 5? If so, how is it manifested?
3. Should teachers of young children be concerned about bullying?
4. Should schools be doing anything to address bullying in young children?

   If so, what should be done?

# APPENDIX B

## FOCUS GROUP GUIDING QUESTIONS

## POST-STRATEGIES

1. What is bullying?
2. Does bullying exist in young children ages 4, and 5? If so, how is it manifested?
3. Should teachers of young children be concerned about bullying?
4. Should schools be doing anything to address bullying in young children?

   If so, what should be done?

# APPENDIX C

## RESEARCH TIMELINE

| | |
|---|---|
| February 1-19 | IRB approval |
| February 22 | Meet with Director of participating school and set up research |
| February 25 | First meeting with focus group |
| March 1-12 | Teachers observe student behaviors on the playground |
| March 22-Apr. 23 | Bibliotherapeutic interventions-30 minutes for each class once per week for three weeks<br>• a) Puppet show outlining vocabulary and definitions (based on the book *Howard B. Wigglebottom Learns About Bullies* by Howard Binkow)<br>• b) Read *The Recess Queen* by Alexis O'Neill and play a game regarding appropriate and inappropriate behaviors<br>• c) Read and use puppets to role play the story in the book, *Lucy and the Bully*, by Claire Alexander, with the children |
| Apr. 26-30 | Second teacher observations of behaviors on playground |
| May 3-7 | Second meeting with focus group |
| May 10-14 | Member checking where participants of the focus group will review transcripts of the focus group discussions to validate researcher's accuracy |
| May 17-21 | Interview Participating Counselor |
| May 24-June 30 | Complete data analysis, writing results, and conclusions |
| July 5-23 | Revisions and editing |

# APPENDIX D

## CHECKLIST OF BEHAVIORS ON PLAYGROUND
## PRE-STRATEGIES TALLY

Teacher Number _____ Date_____

| **Behavior** | **Tally of Number of Occurrences (and examples if appropriate)** |
|---|---|
| Hitting | |
| Pushing | |
| Name Calling | |
| Refusing to Allow Someone to Play | |
| Threatening (eg. You can't come to my birthday party unless you…..) | |
| Refusing to Share or Take Turns | |
| Same child repeatedly having trouble getting along with others | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

# APPENDIX E

## CHECKLIST OF BEHAVIORS ON PLAYGROUND
## POST-STRATEGIES

Teacher Number _____ Date _____

| **Behavior** | **Tally of Number of Occurrences (and examples if appropriate)** |
|---|---|
| Hitting | |
| Pushing | |
| Name Calling | |
| Refusing to Allow Someone to Play | |
| Threatening (eg. You can't come to my birthday party unless you…..) | |
| Refusing to Share or Take Turns | |
| Same child repeatedly having trouble getting along with others | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

# APPENDIX F

## GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR INFORMAL INTERVIEW OF PARTICIPATING COUNSELOR

1. Did teachers' perceptions change as a result of the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions and, if so, what might have caused that?
2. Did you hear any of the teachers mention anything about being changed by the student observations in any way?
3. Were there two reports of bullying from students to their parents as a result of this study?
4. Are there any concrete changes you may have seen in the teachers during or after the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions?
5. Did you notice any use of [bullying] vocabulary from the bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions by the teachers?

# APPENDIX G

## ADULT CONSENT FORM

I, _____, hereby consent to participate in the research project about perception of bullying behavior in young children which is being conducted by Gail Doss, Preschool Principal of The Walker School, 700 North Cobb Parkway, Marietta, Georgia, 678-581-1099. I understand that this participation is strictly voluntary and I can withdraw consent to participate at any time and have the results of the participation returned to me, removed from the experimental records or destroyed.

The following points have been provided to me:

1. The reason for the research is to fulfill a requirement in the doctoral program of Kennesaw State University where Gail is enrolled. The benefits that I may expect from this study are:

   I will be able to assist other adults with awareness of bullying by sharing my perceptions of bullying as data for this study.

2. The procedures are as follows:

   My daughter and I will be interviewed together. There will be a list of suggested questions, but my daughter and I may choose to answer all of them or not answer. These questions will be furnished to us both in advance of the interview. We both will be free to make our own comments during the interview.

3. There are no known risks involved in this research unless my daughter and I feel uncomfortable with the subject of this research.

4. The results of this participation will be totally anonymous and confidential. No participant will be identified unless required by law. There are no consequences of any kind for refusal to participate in this research.

5. Gail will provide me a copy of the results of this research if desired.

_____

Signature of Investigator, Date

_____

Signature of Adult, Date

# APPENDIX H

## STUDENT CONSENT FORM

I give my consent for _____, my child, to participate in the research project about teachers' perceptions of bullying behavior which is being conducted by Gail Doss, Preschool Principal of The Walker School, 700 North Cobb Parkway, Marietta, Georgia, 678-581-1099. I understand that this participation is strictly voluntary and I can withdraw consent for my child to participate at any time and have the results of the participation returned to me, removed from the experimental records or destroyed.

The following points have been provided to me:

1. The reason for the research is to fulfill a requirement in the doctoral program of Kennesaw State University where Gail is enrolled. The benefits that I may expect from this study are:
    a) My child will be more aware of ways bullying behavior occurs and be better prepared to guard against being bullied or becoming a bully
    b) My child will have a safe, bully-free learning environment

2. The procedures are as follows:
    a) My child will be observed on the playground by his/her teachers for two weeks and will have three bullying prevention strategies presented in class by the counselor, Mrs. Julia Stoll, in order to make him/her aware of bullying behavior and ways to prevent it.
    b) My child will be observed on the playground a second time by her/his teachers for two weeks to see if the children's behavior has changed after the presentation of the bullying prevention strategies.

3. There are no known risks involved in this research unless the child is uncomfortable with the topic of this study.
4. The results of this participation will be totally anonymous and confidential. No child will ever be identified unless required by law.
5. This research will not affect your child's grades or schooling in any way, whether she/he participates or not.

_____

Signature of Investigator, Date

_____

Signature of Parent, Date